



## **BALLAD RHYTHM**

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A STUDY  
OF BALLAD RHYTHM

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
BALLAD MUSIC

BY

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*To The Unknown Makers  
of The Ballad of  
Lord Randal*



## FOREWORD

The title A Study of Ballad Rhythm I have chosen not only to designate a subject but to suggest some of the limitations of its treatment. The reader will find this dissertation neither exhaustive in scope nor subtle in its approach. I have made no attempt to say the last word on my subject, but have attempted rather to deal with its more significant phases, and to organize my discussions of these into the form of a connected outline. The reader well versed in music and prosody will perceive, in some of the assertions made, a certain tinge of the obvious. This I have not cared to obviate for fear of decreasing the value of the treatise to readers not so well versed. Moreover, some of the established points extend a clear invitation to further thought and study. This invitation also I have declined, believing that inclusion of relatively insignificant details would not only be undesirable in itself but would defeat my purpose of ordering the material so that its important points should stand forth in clear outline.

The dissertation is concerned with a narrow body of phenomena. In its handling certain modes of analysis must be repeated again and again. All of this involves a certain unavoidable monotony both of method and language. But in dealing with a highly technical subject like this one it is dangerous to relieve monotony to any marked extent by using circumlocutions or other rhetorical devices. For example, once you decide to call a certain metrical division a measure, you are obliged to continue calling it that, to apply any other name only increases the chances for confusion and misunderstanding--chances which are already present in an uncomfortable multitude. Any one familiar with treatises on rhythm will understand this difficulty. In the face of it I have not scrupled to repeat a word a dozen times on the same page if such a procedure seemed necessary to avoid ambiguity or vagueness. The policy is brutal but safe.

A further word regarding monotony. The reader will notice here and there a repetition of some musical or poetic illustration. The repetition has resulted, in most instances, from no lack of other material. Sometimes I have repeated a tune when dozens or hundreds of equally suitable examples were ready to hand. In doing so I have had in mind the expository advantage of the familiar over the unfamiliar. For instance, Sharp's Barbara Ellen appears on page 134 by way of illustrating the oblique character of stress coincidence between melody and verse in  $5/4$  time. On page 150 the song is printed again, this time to show the nature of the strong beginning in compound rhythm. It is my conviction that the reader familiar with the first example will understand the point of the second one the more readily if the same melody be shown, since the points involved in both instances are connected in principle.

I think it safe to assume that the incentive to read this dissertation will exist only for the reader who is to some degree already interested in rhythmic principles and problems, and who is probably therefore conversant with much of the special terminology and apparatus inseparable from such a discus-

sion. I have consequently given little attention to explanations not strictly germane to the problem of the thesis, though I have taken some care to include, at the proper places, references as to where supplementary information may be secured by a reader who may care to make an additional study of general principles, terms, and the like.

As to terminology I have followed, as far as possible, the plan of adopting words generally in use, or at least already used in some reputable work. But the analysis has ploughed up some phenomena and conceptions to which no current terms may properly be applied. To take care of these I have been obliged to invent a few technical words, though I have reduced the number to a minimum and made every effort to supply exact and intelligible definitions. To this end a special glossary has been provided. In the glossary will be found not only words of my own coinage but other terms of restricted currency which may not be known or familiar to the reader. Knowledge of the general terminology of music and prosody, however, is taken for granted.

It would doubtless be advisable to preface a study of ballad rhythm by a definition of the word ballad as used. While in a strictly logical sense such a definition can only be arrived at with much difficulty, I think it is easy enough to make clear to any reader at all familiar with balladry what class of "ballads" we are exclusively concerned with. To avoid any possible misunderstanding, be it said that in these pages we mean by ballads the traditional ballads of the English-speaking people. And by traditional ballad we mean, roughly, any ballad, whatever its origin, which has come to us in any English dialect by the process of oral transmission through generations of unsophisticated singers, and which has been committed to paper without deliberate editorial alteration. Such a string of qualifications may seem to define a rather narrow category, but in reality it is large enough to include the contents of Child's great thesaurus, as well as the folk-songs in all of the smaller collections listed in the bibliography -- all told, no slight bulk of material.

The appended bibliography, it will be seen, is very small. Other recent studies of balladry and ballad structure furnish virtually complete lists of publications upon all phases of the subject. I believe there would be no point in duplicating all of that extensive apparatus here. The best recent bibliography of ballad structure is the excellent one connected with Wolfgang Schmidt's article "Die Entwicklung der Englisch-Schottischen Volksballaden." (Anglia, Band LVII, Heft 1 und 2, ausgegeben Januar und April, 1933.) My own small list of books is intended only to provide the reader with a knowledge of the published sources of the material upon which this investigation is based, and to furnish at the same time what may chance to be a useful (though incomplete) list of authentic folk-song books.

Since it is necessary throughout the discussion to refer frequently to the sources of quoted melodies or verses, I have used for this purpose a simple method of abbreviation, i. e. I

have cited only the author's (or editor's) name to represent his book; or, where the volume has been the result of collaboration, I have generally used the name first in order on the title page. Thus "Barry" refers to Barry, Eckstorm, and Smyth: British Ballads from Maine, and so on. In abbreviating the names of journals, however, conventional practice has been followed. In case any of the forms used are not self-explanatory, the key may be found in the bibliography, where the proper abbreviation for each title is appended. I should warn the reader that the references to Campbell and Sharp's English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians apply to the old (1917) edition. In the later edition some new material has been inserted, and corresponding changes in pagination have resulted. The general order of material, however, has been preserved, so that my page references can be applied to the new edition in an approximate fashion.

The present treatise, needless to say, is in the nature of a superstructure reared upon the foundations laid by other writers. What it may have of originality consists in its recognition of sound rhythmic principle, and in the application of sound principle to a special body of material, and in a special way. The musical point of departure is the most significant aspect of the investigation. Ballad rhythm is not a new subject for discussion, but it is a new subject for a properly aimed comprehensive analysis. Heretofore ballad rhythm has usually meant verse rhythm alone, and often, too, as if ballad poetry were an isolated art, or as if it were subject to the same sort of historical criticism as poetry composed by literary men working in the mainstream of learned tradition. The development of the ballad text in the form of song -- a fact of central importance to the understanding of its structure -- has been, in the main, neglected. As a consequence, critics have been led into not a few misconceptions. My effort has been, avoiding controversy, to arrive at a truer understanding of the rhythm of ballad poetry by studying it primarily as an element of folk-song. But such an inquiry necessitates an understanding of the rhythm of folk-song itself, a structure in which the element of metrical language plays a considerable part. The dissertation thus embraces both song and poetry, and finds occasion to explain each, to some degree, in terms of the other.

Mentioned in the bibliography are the authorities upon whose work the conceptions of rhythm applied in this treatise are (with some reservations) largely based. I owe an especially heavy debt to Professor M. W. Croll's admirable work The Rhythm of English Verse. The debt concerns both fundamental theory and terminology. In the purely musical department I am under obligations to C. J. Sharp's authoritative work English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions. I am deeply grateful to Professor G. H. Gerould for the original suggestion out of which this thesis has grown, and for his patient assistance and discerning criticism. At a number of important points my dissertation is an attempted answer to queries brought forward in Professor Gerould's recent work The Ballad of Tradition. My thanks are

also due to Mr. Rhodes Dunlap for his scholarly criticism of my musical analyses. I extend thanks to Oliver Ditson Company, to G. P. Putnam's Sons, to the Harvard University Press, and to the Yale University Press for permission to print copyrighted material.

J. W. H.  
Houston, Texas  
January 21, 1934

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

xi

	Page
CHAPTER ONE: BALLAD MELODY	1
The Concept of the Phrase	2
The Short Phrase	3
Cadence	4
The Normal Melody	7
Variety in Phrasal Order	9
Third Stage of Integration	10
Formation of the Long Phrase	11
Biphrasal Tunes	14
Longer Tunes	15
Refrain Music	20
Summary	23
Conclusion	25
CHAPTER TWO: THE SCANSION OF BALLAD VERSE	27
Stress and Measure	28
Syllabic Division	29
Application of Method	31
Syncopation	33
Verse Nomenclature	34
CHAPTER THREE: THE STANZA: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS	36
Origin of the Stanza as a Traditional Pattern	36
Function of the Stanza	37
Transition Within the Ballad	49
Regularity Among Texts	51
Music of the Stanza	51
Stability of Stanza and Melody	55
CHAPTER FOUR: COMMON METER	60
CHAPTER FIVE: RATIONALIZING COMMON METER	69
Distinctions	69
The Quatrain Tradition	70
Melodic Analogy	71
Music as Guide	72
Poetry as Guide	74
Summary	77
CHAPTER SIX: LONG METER	78
Structure of Long Meter	79
Comparison With Common Meter	82
Theory and Conjecture	83
CHAPTER SEVEN: OTHER FORMS OF STANZA	88
The Rhymed Couplet	89
The Quatrain of Sevens	92
The Quatrain of Threes	93
The Line of Six Stresses	94
Curious and Anomalous Stanzas	96
Summary of Stanza Types	99



	Page
CHAPTER EIGHT: REFRAINS	100
What the Refrain Is	100
Refrain Versification	102
Alternating Refrains	104
End Refrains Involving Repeated Narrative Verses	105
End Refrains Not Involving Repeated Narrative Elements	111
Other Forms of Refrain	113
Influence of Music	123
Conclusions	124
CHAPTER NINE: MEASURE AND STRESS	127
Stress in Folk-Song	127
Oblique Coincidence	133
Time Variations Within the Tune	134
Wrenched Accent	137
Musical Basis of Wrenched Accent	141
On Reading the Ballad Text	142
Compound Rhythm	143
Alternation of Stress	145
Inversion of Stress	146
Strong and Weak Beginning	149
Illustrations of Strong Beginning	150
Illustrations of Weak Beginning	153
Conclusions	157
Types of Measure	159
The Bisyllabic Measure	164
The Trisyllabic Measure	168
The Quadrisyllabic Measure	170

## Chapter One

### BALLAD MELODY

The ballads of tradition are folk-songs. To a ballad collector this statement would be a platitude. But amid the present confusion of ideas and attitudes concerning balladry, the statement calls for explanatory qualification.

To large numbers of well educated people the word ballad calls to mind not a folk-song, but a poetic text, printed in the Child collection or elsewhere, not meant to be sung or read as music, but meant to be recited or read as verse, in the same manner as one would read "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" or "The Charge of the Light Brigade." It is no exaggeration to say that such a notion of the ballad has gained, at the present time, an enormous currency throughout the English-speaking world. It is, perhaps, the characteristic attitude.

Against this conception enthusiastic folk-song collectors in recent years have been raising a vigorous outcry of protest. They argue that the mere verbal text of a ballad is by no means the "real ballad," that it is analogous to a fossil relic, that the native beauty and peculiar charm of the traditional ballad can never truly be appreciated apart from its music.

They are, of course, right. No one familiar with balladry in its varied aspects could reasonably disagree with their contention. In fact, the seeds of the doctrine deserve a more generous and diffusive sowing and a more receptive soil than they have so far received. We may point with pride to the growing tendency among scholarly critics nowadays to share the collectors' view and espouse their cause.

Yet the case for the reading of the ballad merely as a form of poetry cannot be cavalierly dismissed. There is, for one thing, a large and well preserved corpus of ballad verse whose music is irrecoverably lost. Readers of poetry show no signs of allowing this body of material to sink into neglect. Nor is there any reason why they should. No one would deny that in the Child volumes are some of the finest specimens of English folk-poetry ever committed to paper. To call a ballad text a fossil is not to dispose of its claims to being a valuable artistic form in its own right.

No doubt editors and critics in the past have worked an injustice upon ballad music. Its relative merits have not been adequately understood. The genuine tunes, until recently, have not been made accessible, and persons of musical inclination have not been accorded the privilege of exercising an intelligent choice between ballad song and poetry -- or of enjoying both forms. It is high time the balance be restored. But the preference for the musical ballad is by no means universal, and sufficient reason still exists to class the poetic texts as an artistically respectable and thoroughly legitimate, though derivative, form of the ballad.

The study of ballad rhythm must take these facts into account. It must not restrict itself to the study of folk-song alone, but must devote itself also to the texts as a separate, though correlated, form, a separate order of artistic expression, possessing to some degree its own independent laws of

rhythm and structure.

In traditional practice, however, the text and tune of a ballad are aspects of a single thing. There is, in the artistic sense, no disunity in song. To the ballad singer the verbal text is likewise the musical text, the words are also the music. From this union there follows an important corollary: it is impossible to understand the rhythm of the ballad text without first comprehending clearly the structure of the song from which it is abstracted. The study of the song must precede the study of its language alone.

Moreover, so closely interwoven are the elements of music and language in folk-song that true notions concerning its stanza, verse, and meter cannot be gained apart from a knowledge of the melodic basis upon which, in part at least, these conceptions have been formed. Evidently then, the logical point of departure for a study of ballad rhythm is to be found in ballad melody.

A final word of explanation should precede the analysis of ballad melody laid down in the pages to follow. Ballad music, to repeat the implications of the above remarks, is not in actuality a purely tonal form of music, such as that composed for instrumental performance. It is song music, and being such it often cannot accurately be read or interpreted (and this is especially true of its rhythm) without reference to its language, for it is in terms of language that its form, in singing, is realized. For this reason I have printed in this chapter, along with some of the musical illustrations, the accompanying words or verses belonging to the music, though the immediate importance of these verbal elements is musical, not poetic or textual.

#### THE CONCEPT OF THE PHRASE

We need not here embark upon a detailed or comprehensive study of folk-melody as such, for the general subject contains much information that we have no use for. Such a study, interesting and well illustrated, has been made by C. J. Sharp in his excellent volume English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions. This work should be consulted by the student wishing a general treatment of English folk-music.<sup>1</sup> Our concern is with structural matters which Sharp and his followers have had no occasion to investigate intensively, but without a knowledge of which no valid criticism of ballad rhythm could be attempted.

Ballad melody, like melody in general, is a musical form which is divided into a number of component parts known as phrases. The intelligibility of melody depends upon the form of its phrases, and upon their interdependence in arrangement. Consequently the understanding of ballad melody resolves itself into a problem of comprehending its phrasal conceptions, and this problem involves a careful analysis of phrasal structure and connection.

<sup>1</sup>

Barry's introduction to British Ballads from Maine (see bibliography) is also worth studying, especially to any one interested in the actual collection of ballads.

Melody cannot be discussed, or even thought about intelligently, without the concept of the phrase. Yet the term itself is inherently difficult and troublesome, because it is indefinite and unscientific. It cannot be logically defined, and in many cases it becomes, of necessity, something relative to the mind or the interpretation of the musician. The musical analyst, consequently, must advance his criticism with caution and circumspection. Still, if he does so, keeping constantly aware of his slippery situation, there is no reason why he may not talk sense about the melodic phrase and entertain hope of conveying to the reader a body of definite and tangible information.

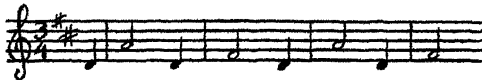
The nearest we can come to defining a phrase is to call it a series of separate tones (scored as notes in the staff) which takes form in the mind, in some unexplained way, as a whole. Whether the psychic equation involves intellect, or emotion, or both, or other factors as well is a problem of psychological speculation which need not concern us. The perception of the phrase as an integer or unit of form is the fundamental fact of melodic comprehension. In pursuing the truth and implications of this fact, we shall do well at the outset to assume strictly the viewpoint of the grammarian, whose object is to push his analysis of structure to the most fundamental matters.

#### THE SHORT PHRASE

Melody, like poetry or other rhythmic arts, rises to its complete form through a series of ascending stages of complexity. The raw material of music is tone. Tones, represented by notes, are the irreducible units. They are to music what words are to language, or what stones are to a stone wall. It is by means of grouping them together in various ways that melody, or any other form of music, is created. When a few notes are grouped together and related to each other so as to form a simple pattern, intelligible to the mind as such, and having musical meaning, we have what, grammatically considered, is the first integration in the series which finally shapes tone into proportioned melody. This first, or primary, integration results in the simple musical form which I shall hereafter call the short phrase, coining a term essential to the present criticism. The following two short phrases are typical specimens:

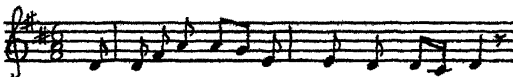
#### The Jew's Daughter

Davis, No. 33(A), p. 587 (first phrase). Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



#### Lord Randall

Barry, No. 12A, p. 47 (first phrase). Courtesy Yale Univ. Press



From the analyst's point of view, phrases of this length are the fundamental units of melodic structure throughout balladry, and are therefore of great critical importance. They are, in a sense, the universal currency of phrasal organization, to which all ballad music can be reduced in the end. It is practically impossible to find a folk-tune which cannot, at bottom, be analyzed in terms of them, no matter how complex its phrasal structure may be.<sup>2</sup>

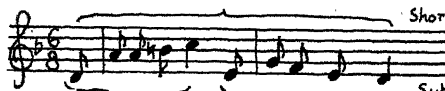
The astonishing thing about the short phrase is its regularity. For reasons later to be investigated, its total length, or extent, is almost invariably the same. In the above specimens it can be seen that such is the fact, and it is everywhere equally true of folk-music. The first example above occupies four single-time measures of music, and the second covers two double-time measures, the phrasal result in both cases being dimensionally alike. But double time is the rule in ballad music, relative to which single time must be counted as uncommon and exceptional. It will therefore be convenient to define the short phrase in terms of double time, i.e. time signatory in the common ratios 4/4, 6/8, and the like, including five-time as well, since this in ballad music is virtually a form of double time.<sup>3</sup> The short phrase, then, is normally a phrase occupying two measures of musical notation. Out of this basic unit all melodies and all longer phrases are made up.

#### CADENCE

So far we have confined criticism of the phrase to rather general terms, and have looked at it as it appears isolated from its context. We must now examine it as part of a continuous melody, observing more in detail its formal features as well as its connections with adjacent phrases. Phrasal identity does depend, as already mentioned, upon the perception of its unity; but the recognition of a phrase is by no means a matter of purely mystical experience. It is conditioned and assisted by

2

In a grammatical sense, the short phrase may frequently be subdivided into smaller patterns; but these sub-phrases, like the individual notes, are of too minute a character to make any difference in a scheme of phrasal analysis. We shall consequently disregard them. Their existence may be noted in the following short phrase from Sharp's The Outlandish Knight (Sharp, No. 11, p. 29. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.) Similar instances may be found in almost any tune.



3

There are exceptions to this rule which should be noted. Habits and methods of notation vary somewhat among collectors. It is impossible, consequently, to frame an inviolable definition of the short phrase in terms of the number of measures which it contains. In fact, sometimes the music necessitates a departure from the general rule. In tunes written in 12/8 or 4/4 time where the eighth-note is the syllabic unit, sometimes the short phrase occupies only one measure. See, for example, Barry, pp. 195, 318, 320.

certain characteristic structural features, both tonal and metrical. The most important of these is the cadence, which is a fairly reliable touchstone of phrasal identity. The cadence is analogous to, and answers the same purpose as, the stop in language. It is what brings the phrase to a termination, and what serves chiefly to mark the point of division between phrases which are connected in the melody.<sup>4</sup>

Cadence, of course, is illustrated in any random example of song. The following tune has no peculiar claims to cadential distinction, but it will serve our purpose quite satisfactorily. We have here a complete melody consisting of four short phrases in the order a, b, b, a -- a phrasal formula quite common among ballads. Each phrase terminates in a cadence (1, 2, 3, 4), and it will be noticed that each cadence is emphasized by the relatively long duration of the half-note which concludes it.

Young Beeham

Cox, No. 89C, p. 528. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



The notation of these cadences may require a word of explanation. Since no logical method exists for determining precisely the point where the cadence begins, I have indicated this indefiniteness by the dotted lines, and placed solid lines under only the last two notes of the phrase, where, of course, the cadence has become firmly resolved and very clearly defined. (Throughout the dissertation it will be advisable to use small letters in denoting short phrases, capitals to denote longer units.)

The rôle played by the half-notes in the tune above needs further explanation. In practice, as a general rule, melodic cadences are accompanied by metrical stops, or pauses, usually (as above) in the form of a tonal prolongation, though the stop may take the form of a rest, or, not uncommonly, both rest and

4

In modern musical terminology, the cadence which brings a melody to its final conclusion is sometimes called a perfect cadence, and one which serves merely to separate contiguous phrases an imperfect cadence. These terms do not strictly apply to ballad melody, for the tunes are not harmonized by folk-singers; the terms, on the other hand, have evolved with harmonic music and ordinarily represent our sense of the harmonic sequence of underlying chords. But if this reservation is allowed, there is no reason why these convenient terms should not be used in our discussion of simple melodic cadences.

prolongation occur together. This phenomenon, which we may call cadential pause, is not strictly melodic, in the sense that it is not a function of pitch, but belongs only to the time-pattern. It is by no means a necessary adjunct to cadence, which is sometimes to be found without it, as happens in the following melody:

Mollie Vaunders

'Cox, No. 102A, p. 529. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



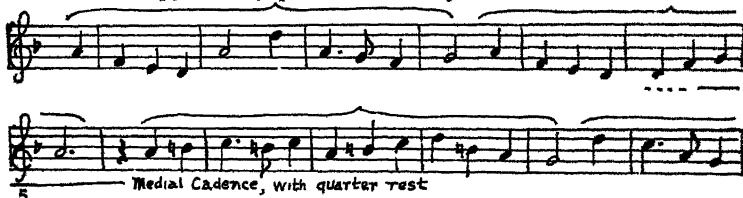
In this tune the medial cadence is treated in an uncommon and interesting fashion. Normally this cadence would terminate in a half-note, but here the cadential pause is overridden by an uninterrupted sequence of crotchets. Yet the cadence itself and the phrasal division which it marks are both perfectly clear. The instance demonstrates the distinction between cadence as a phenomenon of pitch, and the cadential pause as a phenomenon of time.

Usually the term cadence is used more loosely to refer to all of the phenomena, both of pitch and meter, which have been described above. I have drawn the distinction between the tonal and metrical aspects because the difference between them is important to the later criticism of verse and stanza form.

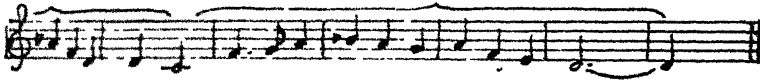
The following tune will show how cadence (especially the imperfect cadence in the medial position) is often marked not only by a prolonged note, but by a rest as well.

Robin Hood and the Tanner

Sharp, No. 4, p. 8. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



Another excellent example of this cadential formula is furnished by Barry's Lord Randall, (AI, p. 47), the first phrase of which is printed above (see p. 3). Here a melody of the phrasal form a,b,b,a, and in 6/8 time, concludes each phrase with a quarter-note and an eighth-rest. This tune likewise furnishes an illustration of the remarkable cadential regularity not infrequently found in ballad tunes.



The examples I have given will indicate that the cadential pause exhibits considerable variety of form. As noted above, it is a characteristic phase of cadence, often contributing greatly to our sense, or perception, of melodic phrasing.

#### THE NORMAL MELODY

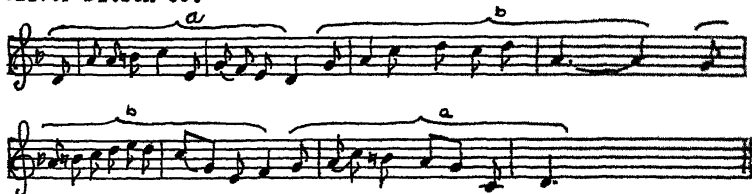
We have now distinguished the important earmarks of the melodic phrase, and must return to the consideration of the phrase as a complete unit. We have already defined the short phrase as the primary step in melodic organization, and have observed that it normally occupies two musical measures. It has also been asserted that the short phrase, grammatically regarded, is the fundamental unit in the structure of all ballad music. It might be expected from all of this, a priori, that in the second stage of melodic integration (i.e. when short phrases are combined into longer units) the average tune would be made up of short phrases, and they would be interrelated in much the same way as the phrases in the melodies of Young Beeham and Mollie Vaunders shown above. An extended examination of tunes shows that such, indeed, is the actual case. Melodies of this sort are the general stock-in-trade of ballad music. Most commonly, our ballad melodies are composed of four distinct short phrases, all of them about equal in significance and integrity relative to the whole melody which they assist each other in forming. That is, each separate phrase, in such a tune, enjoys the same degree of musical independence, retains fully its identity, and does not coalesce with its neighbor phrase to produce a longer united segment. The organization of these tunes does not, therefore, advance beyond the second stage of melodic integration: the notes make the short phrases; the short phrases form the tune, and the structure, though simple, is complete. This fact is important, for it is what separates these tunes (so composed, as a type, of four short phrases) from other types not so constituted, whose short phrases merge into longer ones, out of which melody finally emerges in a third stage of organization later to be taken account of.

The melodic pattern of four short phrases is so common among ballads that it may be reckoned the normal type. Somewhere in the neighborhood of half our recorded tunes belong to it, though exact figures cannot be relied upon, since it is inescapable that in musical diagnosis of this sort considerable leeway has got to be left for divergent interpretation. Perhaps a fair idea of proportion can be gained from Barry's volume. Out of 56 tunes which I have inspected in that collection, 27 are of the normal type. This showing is roughly representative of the other collections. Most probably the type includes more ballads than all other types can muster, added together. We shall need a more descriptive name to designate the normal melody. Its two special characteristics are the number of its phrases,



namely four, and the fact that the phrases are simple in the sense of being uncompounded with adjoining phrases. I shall therefore apply to these tunes the useful, if awkward, name of simple quadriphrasal melody.<sup>6</sup>

In the tune of Young Beeham we have already seen a member of this type whose phrases were arranged in the order a,b,b,a. We may now notice some of the other most characteristic arrangements of parts. The pattern a,b,b,a is probably the most usual single formula in folk-music; yet in the tune of Young Beeham the repetition of phrase is too remarkably exact, and the cadences, with their accompanying pauses, too closely alike to be quite typical of the generality of tunes. Usually the phrases are considerably varied in repetition, and the final and medial cadences more pronounced and important than the other two. I have called Young Beeham a representative tune, and indeed it is one; but an even more typical specimen is the following variant of The Outlandish Knight from Sharp. No.11, p.29. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



It would be difficult to find a more typical pattern than this of simple quadriphrasal melody, or a tune more suggestive of the usual character of ballad music in general. Among collections of authentic folk-songs one may discover hundreds of tunes built up like this one, or closely related to it in structure.<sup>7</sup> Tunes containing other than a total of four phrases very seldom contain fewer; the total number is almost always four or more. Tunes having four or more phrases certainly make up fully ninety per cent of all tunes so far recorded. It is correct to gather from such statements that ballad melody, by and large, is characterized by considerable regularity. Yet some reservations to this assertion are required. It is true that, when

6

The survey of ballad music from which the facts and theories in this and following chapters have been derived is based chiefly upon the contents of the following collections: Barry, Campbell and Sharp, Sharp, Graig, Cox, Davis, and Smith. For a list of other collections used see bibliography. With due allowance for all possibility of alternative phrasal readings, this ample cross-section of available ballad music shows, beyond doubt, that the above pattern constitutes by far the most numerous and important single class of tunes in balladry, and that its establishment as a norm is justified by the facts.

The characteristic quality of such melodies was noted by C. J. Sharp in 1907. He writes (English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions, 73): "The usual stanza of poetry [in folk-song] contains four measured lines, not necessarily of equal length, though forming a just balance; and the music to which such a stanza is set consists, normally, of four phrases, the points of division being marked off by means of cadences. Of these the middle cadence is the most important."

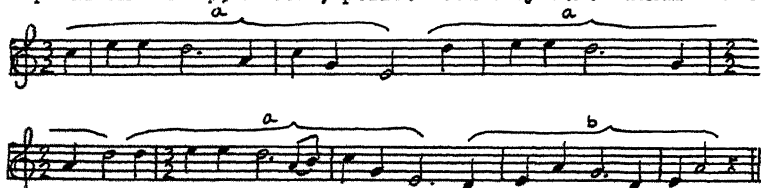
the whole field of ballad music is explored, a remarkable variety of tunes can be discovered. Good ones and poor ones, they range from patterns of the most naïve phrasal repetition to models of surprising subtlety and elaboration. Among the latter are not a few melodies of striking individuality. But these, after all, are a small numerical minority--an ornamental fringe around the rank and file of tunes which are, in principle, very much alike. Generic similarity in structural principle does not reduce the music to a monotonous level of uniformity, for within the limits so prescribed there still remains enormous opportunity for melodic variation. But it does result in the emergence of the normal type now under consideration.

## VARIETY IN PHRASAL ORDER

We have studied two examples of the formula a,b,b,a. The following simple tune, in the form a,a,a,b, illustrates the extreme economy in the use of material sometimes evident in folk-melody.

Geordie

Campbell and Sharp, No.28B, p.118. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



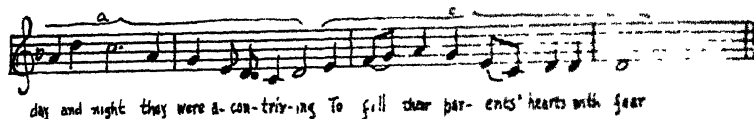
The folk-song collections, as would be expected, exhibit numerous other simple quadriphrasal combinations which we need not stop here to inspect. Should the reader turn, for instance, to pages 11, 16, and 31 in Campbell and Sharp, he would find three tunes arranged respectively in the orders a,a,b,b, a,b,a,b, and a,b,a,c. And this sort of variety would be what he might expect to encounter in any collection of ballad song. In general, at least one phrase of a melody is repeated, though often much altered, in the course of its singing, for repetition and contrast are fundamental principles of the structure of music. The excellent quality of some of our best tunes seems to depend considerably upon these inherent laws of structure. The reader may notice their effect in the following English variant of Bruton Town -- a tune, needless to say, of uncommon beauty.

Bruton Town

Sharp, No. 2, p. 4. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



In Bru-ton Town there lived a far-mer Who had two sons and one daugh-ter dear 85



Only rarely can tunes be found whose phrases are all different. Such an arrangement appears in the following air, phrased a,b,c,d, but even in this melody there is a soupeon of resemblance between phrases b and c, which suggests that this variant has evolved from an a,b,b,c pattern. As it stands, however, it exhibits considerable freedom of invention.

As I Walked Through the Meadows

Sharp, English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions, p. 77. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



The phrasing of even simple quadriphrasal tunes, such as those just discussed, is frequently difficult to make out, so puzzling at times is the fusion of similar and dissimilar material. Sharp's variant of High Barbary is a good illustration of this fact. Sharp, No. 12, p. 32. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



Whether this tune ought to be regarded as consisting of phrases a,b,c,d, or of phrases a,b,b,a, is at least a delicate, perhaps an altogether subjective, question.

THIRD STAGE OF INTEGRATION

No one would deny that a tune like that of Sharp's The Out-landish Knight printed above is composed of four distinct phrases. Nor would any one deny, having examined a number of folk-song collections, that such a melody represents the most common musical pattern to be found therein. Our analysis has already disclosed that tunes of this kind do not advance beyond the second stage of melodic complexity, i. e. the synthesis of short phrases into the complete tune. But nearly all melodies

not belonging to the simple quadriphrasal type-- and these comprise, perhaps, nearly half of all the tunes we have -- reach a third stage of organization. This stage results from the union of two short phrases to form what we may now call technically the long phrase --the phrase of four musical measures in double time. The integration of such a tune thus assumes the following line of progression: (1) notes to short phrase, (2) short phrases to long phrases, (3) long phrases to complete melody. Tunes so constructed vary a good deal in finished form, but they are usually longer than the eight-measure melodies with which we have so far been concerned. Only a few of them consist merely of two long phrases. The great majority consist of three or four long phrases, or of two or more long phrases among which short phrases are intermingled, or alternated, or superadded in many different ways. It is among melodies of the latter sort that we may search for the examples of elaboration and subtlety mentioned earlier in the discussion.

#### FORMATION OF THE LONG PHRASE

The nature of the long phrase and its claim to identity may best be studied from the quadriphrasal point of departure. The simple melodies we have been scrutinizing leave no question of phrasal formulation unsettled. They are all clearly of four short phrases. Such a division is necessary and justified both from the grammatical and musical points of view. And be it said again, that from the strictly grammatical angle, the short phrase must be universally and everywhere reckoned as the fundamental unit and matrix of ballad music.

But the analyst interested in formal relations of tune and text must not be tied down to grammatical criteria alone, indispensable as these are to the comprehension of minute elements of form. In establishing structural types we have finally been guided, and must still be guided, by the conception of melody as an expressive art. Tunes must be phrased, as real types, from the standpoint of the musician or the interpreter of completely organized artistic form. So regarded, a good many of the familiar eight-measure tunes show tendencies toward a coalition of short phrases. The tendency may be noticed in the following example.

#### Sweet William and Lady Margaret

Cox, No. 11C, p. 523. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



The persistent repetition of figure in the short phrases, and the conclusion of cadences I and II on the tonic, mark this a simple quadriphrasal tune, recognizable in the formula a,b,c,c, or perhaps a,a,b,b. On the other hand, the continuity of the long phrases, together with the emphasis and resemblance of the medial and final cadences, suggests the reading A,B for the whole musical sentence. Clearly the tune cannot be called, obviously and beyond question, either quadriphrasal or biphrasal, for its features are sufficiently ambiguous to preclude any such easy disposition. A considerable number of four-phrase melodies -- perhaps one out of every dozen or so -- involve this element of structural uncertainty in their analysis. In such tunes, the musician or critic has, in the end, no dependable guide to a proper reading except his own musical feeling or taste.

For my own part, I am strongly inclined to read melodies of the sort as four-phrase sentences, for two reasons. First, in the final test -- when the tune is sung, as it should be, in terms of its words -- melodies doubtful in musical structure alone almost always resolve themselves, to my judgment, into four natural phrasal divisions. The reader will remember, of course, that this is not a logical explanation, but only a matter of taste. In the second place, the shortness of the eight-measure tune, as compared with melodies of ten, twelve, and sixteen measures, tends to resolve it into the shorter units. As a general thing, the longer the duration of the tune, the stronger becomes the inclination to conceive its longer segments as its natural parts, and *vice versa*. This is natural to the mind. The feeling of time-pattern changes between the singing of an eight-measure and the singing of a sixteen-measure melody in very much the same manner as it does when the orchestra conductor begins to beat double measures instead of single measures. The longer tune, to borrow a term from mechanics, is higher-g geared. The reader may make a test for himself by reading or singing the two following ballad stanzas.

Sweet William and Lady Margaret

Cox, No. 11C, p. 523 Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

Sweet William a-rose one morn-ing, And dressed him-self in blue: Came  
told un-to me the long long love, Be-tween Lady Margaret and you.

Sweet William and Lady Margaret

Davis, No. 19E, p. 570 Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

(Continued on p. 13.)

Sweet Wil - liam a rose one May May Morning, And dressed him - self in blue "Come  
tell un - to me this long long love Be tween La dy Margaret and you" "I  
know no - thing of Lady Margaret, And the least she knows of me; Be -  
fore to - day you met ting at ten, ten o' clock, Lady Margaret my bride shall be "

Here, side by side. are two variants of the ballad we have been studying. To my own musical sense, the first suggests the reading a,a,b,b, in terms of the short phrase, while the latter surely cannot be read except as a four-phrase sentence A,A,B,A, the long phrase marking the natural divisions.

One group of tunes deserves special attention in this connection. Some melodies in Greig's Scottish collection are built upon the plan of the following two examples.

Proud Lady Margaret

Greig, No. XX, p. 37, and No. 2, p. 70.

Barbara Allen

These tunes, I believe, should be read as composed of four short phrases, a,b,a,b, though, it must be admitted, there is a great deal about them to suggest the form A,A. This pattern, common in Greig, is not characteristic of any other collection. Such a curious freak must, no doubt, be explained as simply

another manifestation of the unaccountable regional idiosyncrasies prevalent in all aspects of balladry.

#### BIPHRASAL TUNES

The tunes above have shown the tendency of the short phrases to fuse together in pairs, not only in the longer tunes, but also in the familiar four-phrase melodies. Among the latter the fusion sometimes becomes so complete that a couplet of long phrases is produced, and we have a biphrasal tune, in spite of the short duration of the entire musical sentence. I have classed as such only those melodies whose figures and cadences unmistakably define them as musically biphrasal, and they are rare enough; but that they actually exist can be seen in the following examples.

##### False Lamkin

Sharp, No. 27, p. 62. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



##### The Three Butchers

Campbell and Sharp, No. 50A, p. 179. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



##### The Cherry Tree Carol

Davis, No. 13B, p. 565. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



Let us notice particularly the last example, a Negro variant from Virginia. The tune, of course, can be phrased a,b,a,c, but the cadential arrangement and melodic contour point to a grouping of the first two and latter two measures into the phrasal pattern A,B. Only a handful of tunes can be found in which a

biphrasal reading is as strongly suggested as this -- certainly, not over three or four per cent of those which I have examined. In Greig, as I have mentioned, a good many melodies lean heavily in this direction, and perhaps some musicians would read some of them as couplets. The opinions of some musical critics whom I have consulted, however, favor their interpretation as phrasal quatrains.

It is unnecessary to follow this exhibition of melodies by the remark that the distinctions which separate biphrasal tunes from quadriphrasal tunes, among the shorter ballads, are always extremely tenuous, and in a casual or careless reading would probably never be observed.

## LONGER TUNES

So far we have been attending to short tunes of eight measures, or their equivalent, and have noticed that these almost always are made up of a quatrain of short phrases, and very seldom contain long phrases. The long phrase, in fact, is more natural to tunes of greater extent than those we have been perusing.

One important type of long-phrase melody has already incidentally been exhibited in the second variant of Sweet William and Lady Margaret printed above. (see p. 13). This tune, composed of sixteen measures, is practically a normal melody multiplied by two, since each of its four phrases, as well as its total duration, is just twice as long. This type may be called compound quadriphrasal melody. It often exhibits extraordinary complexity of structure.

Captain Wedderburn's Courtship

Greig, No. 1a, p. 36



A la-dy fair one May morning Went out to take a walk ; A no-bie lord he



fol-lowed her An' then be-gan to talk. He hysed her on his saddle bow, An'



he's stown her a-wa, An' ta'en her aff to his cas-tle, To lay her next the wa'.

See, for example, Campbell and Sharp, Nos. 40B and 50B; Davis, Nos. 13B, 18A, 23F, 40C, and 49D. I find no tunes at all in Smith, Cox, or Barry which are capable of this interpretation.



Clearly this is a four-phrase pattern, A, B, C, B. But it should also be noticed in what an amazingly ingenious and effective way its subordinate elements are combined and recombined to construct the complete pattern. The subordinate short phrases recur throughout the melody in a remarkable fashion, ab, ac, cb, ac. Melodies of this kind dispose of any inclination to deny that ballad music frequently attains a high level of artistic composition. The texts set to melodies of this sort are similarly built up (unless refrain elements are present) by the adding together of two ordinary ballad stanzas, as the example will show, though this statement is true only in respect to the mechanical structure of the stanza.

The longer tunes of all types are normally constructed by means of such intermixture between long and short phrases. The intermixture, of course, takes many forms, and is varied in a multitude of ways. One type of tune -- a fairly common one -- consists of three long phrases, the last phrase being a repetition of the second. There is usually a corresponding repetition of verses in the poetic stanza. The repeated element is a form of refrain. The whole pattern is a compound triphrasal melody.

#### The Gardener

Greig, No. a, p. 157

La-dy Mar-gret stood in her bow'r door, As strach't a wil-low wand,

An' by there cam the gard-ner lad, Wi a red rose in his hand,

An' by there cam the gard-ner lad, Wi a red rose in his hand<sup>9</sup>

In another melodic pattern sometimes found, the two long

<sup>9</sup>

Tunes of this length, set to verses in the same pattern, however, sometimes consist of six short phrases, as does Campbell and Sharp, No. 9A, p. 29. (Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons)

#### The Cruel Mother

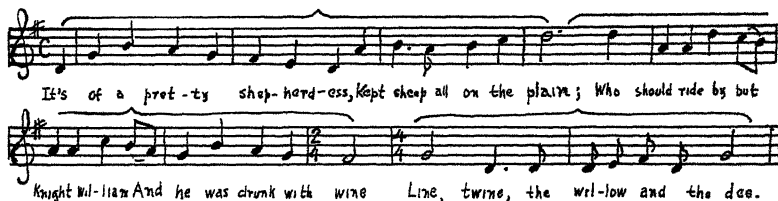
She laid her-self all a- gainst the oak, All a-long in the Lude - ney

And first it bent and then it broke, Down by the green-wood side

phrases, containing the ballad stanza proper, are followed by a single short phrase by way of refrain.

The Knight and the Shepherd's Daughter

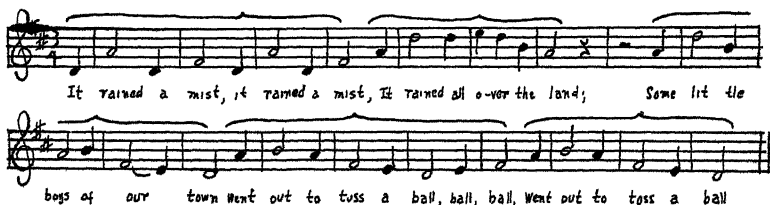
Sharp, No. 3, p. 6. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



But more commonly tunes of this length consist of five short phrases, the fourth phrase being characteristically repeated, often in variation. In the following example the phrase in question is repeated almost without change. The tune, scored in single time, furnishes an illustration of a rhythm not ordinary among ballads.

The Jew's Daughter

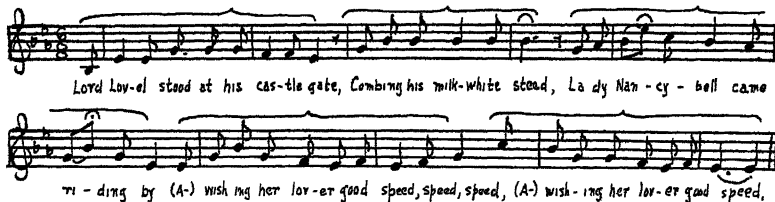
Davis, No. 33A, p. 587. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



Another, and more typical, instance of the same pattern is the following. In the stanzas set to such tunes, the final verse is repeated, so that the device constitutes an element of refrain. The repetition of the final word in the fourth verse is characteristic.

Lord Lovel

Davis, No. 20B, p. 573. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

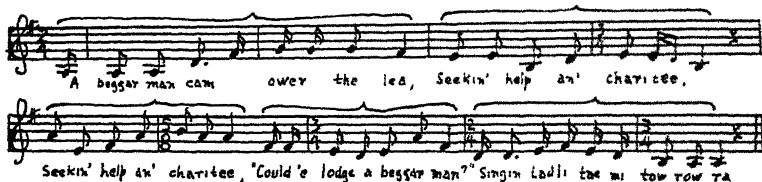


Closely related in form to the above is the tune of five short phrases in which the fifth phrase (the refrain) is not a

repetition of the fourth.

The Gaberlunvie Man

Barry, p. 333. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press



Among ballads from the Southern Appalachian region the following pattern is quite common, but it seems to be at present very rare in other parts of America or in the British Isles, if our modern collections provide reliable evidence. Its characteristic form grows out of the peculiar manner in which its refrain elements are repeated.

The Old Lord of the North Country or The Three Sisters

Davis, No. 5A, pp. 552, 553. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



The pattern does not appear, so far as I have found, in any of the modern British or Scottish collections. But it undoubtedly has come to America straight out of British tradition, since several texts in Child are perfect specimens of the formula, though these are not printed with their tunes. (See Child, Nos. 10B, 21A, 26.) So common is the pattern that it requires, for purposes of discussion, a name of its own. Yet so complicated is its structure, and so subject to minor variations, that any term descriptive of its peculiarities is difficult to conceive. For these reasons I shall call this pattern the Two Sisters type, since nearly all the recorded variants of

that ballad belong to it.

A final melodic type of importance is that fitted to the ballad stanza having an end refrain<sup>10</sup> of considerable length. As the next example will show, the difference in musical character between the refrain and the other part of the tune is sometimes very slight.

Gypsy Davy

Barry, No. D, p. 272. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press

How could you leave your house and home? How could you leave your ba-by? How  
could you leave your love and lord, And e-lope with a gypsy Da-vy?  
Fiddle daddle lin-go din-go day, Fiddle daddle lin-go Da-vy. I  
married you against my will, In sport for the gypsy Da-vy.

In the following tune, however, the two phrases of the end refrain possess together an independent character, a strength of self-assertion, quite distinct from the preceding bars of melody.

The Gypsy Laddie

Campbell and Sharp, No. 27A, p. 112. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

It was late in the night when the Squire came home En-quiring for his  
la-dy, His ser-vants made a sure re-ply. She's gone with the gyp-sen  
Da-vy. Rat-tle turn a gyp-sen, gyp-sen, Rat-tle turn a gyp-sen Da-vy

Throughout the dissertation the term end refrain will be used to designate any sort of refrain element which is superadded to the narrative stanza proper, as opposed to those refrain elements which are internal to the stanza.

It is interesting to notice that both melodies above are variants of the same ballad, Gypsy Davy, the first one from Maine, the second from Tennessee. Ballads having refrains of a given type strongly tend to retain them through all the adventures and vicissitudes of oral transmission. No better study of this fact could be made than a comparison of the recorded variants of Lord Lovell<sup>11</sup> or of The Two Sisters. The structural similarity of the variants of these ballads (and of numerous others) shows a remarkable conservatism of musical tradition, both in America and in the British Isles.

#### REFRAIN MUSIC

It will be noticed that nearly all the melodic types grouped under the heading "Longer Tunes" contain various elements of refrain. The refrain itself -- a significant structural matter -- will be more fully investigated in a later chapter devoted to that subject. From the musical examples printed above, however, it is already possible to draw some conclusions.

Among the ballads of the folk-song collections, refrains usually consist of elements superadded to the stanza proper. The notion that the normal refrain of balladry is an alternating verse set inside the stanza (as in Child 4A)<sup>12</sup> has apparently grown out of a too exclusive study of Child's collection, whose ballads in many cases have obviously lost their refrains, unless (as there is no reason to expect) the ballads recorded in earlier days had fewer refrains than our contemporary models. In Campbell and Sharp -- a good representative American collection -- out of 55 A-variants, only 3 have alternating refrains like that of Child 4A, while those having various elements of end refrain number 15, and those having still other forms add up to 4. That alternating refrains should be relatively more common in Child is understandable, since in reciting a ballad to a collector interested chiefly in the story, the reciter would be inclined to lop off such unessential things as end refrains. Moreover, end refrains are easily lost sight of unwittingly by ballad singers who attempt to tell the story un-

11

Almost all of the variants I have examined of this ballad have the same type of end refrain, like that shown in the variant above (p. 17), i.e. a single short phrase added to the tune of the stanza proper. See Davis, p. 574, (three Virginia variants); Scarborough, p. 55, (North Carolina); Campbell and Sharp, p. 71, (North Carolina); Barry, p. 139, (Maine); Smith, p. 122, (South Carolina); Greig, p. 58, (Scotland); J. A. F. L. Vol. 35, p. 343, (Pennsylvania); J. A. F. L. Vol. 18, p. 292 (New Jersey). It is true, of course, that the extremely close consistency of pattern in these variants is unusual, but the tendency illustrated applies generally to folk-song.

12

Child, 4A, first stanza (punctuation follows Child):

Fair Lady Isabel sits in her bower sewing,  
Aye as the Rowans grow gay  
 There she heard an elf-knight blowing his horn.  
The first morning in May

assisted by the music.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, one cannot cut out the internal alternating lines of refrain without at the same time fatally mutilating the stanza. Even though careless about end refrains, reciters and poetry-loving recorders of texts would not have been likely to commit such an atrocity very often.

As would be expected, the music of refrains varies a great deal in form and character. In fact, the refrain is the chief factor in producing the variety everywhere observable among English folk-songs. But there exist no real generic differences by which refrain music, as a whole, can be distinguished from stanza music. This is not to say that a person fairly conversant with ballad music, on hearing a tune without its words, could never in any case tell whether the melody he was hearing had a refrain or no. In many cases he could do so easily. In Sharp's Lord Rendal a refrain is clearly indicated by the abrupt change of tempo and mood in the latter phrases.

### Lord Rendal

Sharp, No. 18, p. 44. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.

Where have you been all the day, Ren- dal my son? Where have you been all the day, my pret ty one? I've  
 been to my sweet-heart, Mother, I've been to my sweet-heart Mother —  
 Make my bed soon, for I'm sick to my heart and I fain would lie down

In Barry's Gypsy Davy D (shown on page 19) the movement of the fourth and fifth short phrases suggests unassisted an end refrain of nonsense syllables.

13

A convincing illustration of this statement has recently come to light. (See Foster B. Gresham, "The Jew's Daughter: An Example of Ballad Variation," *J. A. F. L.*, Vol. 47 (1934) 358-361.) In Prince George County, Virginia, a woman who was asked to sing The Jew's Daughter became embarrassed and refused. Later she agreed to recite the words, and began to do so; but her memory faltered after the second stanza, and she found she had to sing the words in order to recall them. This led her finally into singing the whole ballad. Here are the verses of a stanza as she sang it:

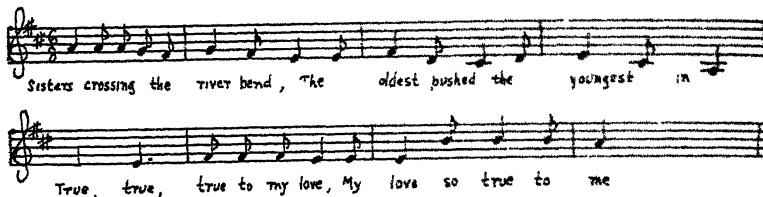
It rained a mist, it rained a mist,  
 It rained all over the town;  
 Two little boys came out to play,  
 They tossed their ball around, around,  
 They tossed their ball around.

I quote F. B. Gresham's observation: "It is interesting to note that in reciting the words, she did not repeat the last line of the first and second stanzas; had she not turned to singing, the use of the last line of each stanza as a refrain would not have been indicated."

Or again, the rhythmic figure sometimes vaguely provides a clue, as in Barry's The Two Sisters C.

The Two Sisters

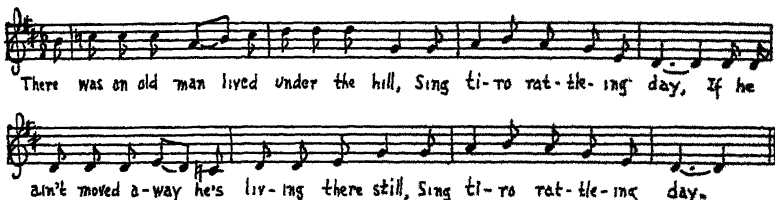
Barry, No. C, p. 42. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press



But all of these instances must be thought of as sporadic rather than as structurally typical. Often nothing at all in the music gives a hint of the refrain in the stanza text. The tune of the following ballad in itself seems in all respects like hundreds of other simple quadruphrasal tunes, arousing not the slightest suspicion that half of the verses to which it is set are refrain lines.

The Farmer's Curs'd Wife

Campbell and Sharp, No. 34B, p. 140. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



Yet we may generalize to the point of saying that the music to which refrains are set is, on the whole, more various and irregular than other ballad music, and that, correspondingly, ballads having refrains are, as a class, more variegated than those not having them. It is the ballads bearing refrains which largely make up the important class of unclassifiable specimens.

These we have not yet had a chance to inspect, but about such ballads a final word is in order. In studying the forms of traditional folk-song, we usually have to deal with the characteristic, seldom with the universal. This is plainly and emphatically true of folk-melody. In the foregoing discussion we have held under the critical microscope those elements of melody requisite to a clear understanding of the melodic basis of verse and stanza form. In process of carrying out such a program we have arranged in order a number of different melodic types -- the familiar, common, and characteristic ones of folk-song. Of course it must not be supposed that the catalogue is,

or could be, a complete one. Many tunes, complicated in a bewildering variety of ways by elements of refrain, will not fit into any of our carefully constructed categories. Most of them are closely related in structure to one or another of the models on exhibition, but even a considerable number of these assume such individuality of figure and phrasal intermixture as to defy useful classification. For instance, no other tune has ever appeared -- at least in our collections -- having anything like the melodic shape of Sharp's Lord Rendal printed above (page 21). And where should one expect ever to encounter a structural replica of the following unique phenomenon from Tennessee?

The False Knight Upon the Road

Campbell and Sharp, No. 1A, p. 1. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

(first stanza)

The knight met a child in the road ... where are you going to? Said the knight in the road I'm a going to my school, said the child as he stood. He stood and he stood and it's well because he stood I'm a going to my school, said the child as he stood

These songs, and many like them, demonstrate the impossibility, even if it were desirable, of setting up an inclusive row of categorical straight-jackets for the critical accommodation of our folk-tunes. The makers of the ballads, bound as they were by the habits of a tradition, nevertheless broke through the barriers of normality frequently enough to bequeath to lovers of genuine song a rich heritage of exceptional, and often exceptionally beautiful ballad melodies.

SUMMARY

The discussion of ballad music so far has dealt with both fact and opinion. Some points have been demonstrated, others merely theorized about. I have endeavored all along to draw a continuous and clear line between what is true and what is not certainly true but only probable or possible. But doubtless, in the interest of clearness and definiteness, it is advisable here to score the line a shade more deeply, by pausing to draw up a summary of findings.

The following points, I believe, have either been demonstrated as facts, or else are so clearly provable as not to require demonstration:

1. The structure of ballad melody is phrasal, and the short phrase is the fundamental unit of form.



2. Grammatically conceived, ballad melody rises through a series of definite stages of organization from tone to proportioned whole.

3. Melodic phrases are virtually standardized in length. Normally the short phrase occupies two musical measures, the long phrase four.

4. The normal ballad tune is composed of four short phrases, each marked by a cadence, the medial and final cadences being the most important.

5. The long phrase is formed by the union of two contiguous short phrases into a clearly recognizable and unified melodic entity.

6. Practically all ballad tunes are composed of short phrases, or of long phrases, or of combinations of the two.

7. The short phrase is the normal and natural unit of tunes scored in eight measures, or in fewer. The long phrase is often, but not always, the natural unit of melodies longer than eight measures.

8. Phrasal interpretations are frequently difficult and based upon nothing more tangible than taste or feeling.

9. Not all tunes longer than eight measures contain elements of refrain, but most of them do.

10. A considerable proportion of tunes longer than eight measures can be grouped into types of recurrent pattern.

11. A considerable number of tunes longer than eight measures cannot be grouped at all, but are individually unique.

12. Among recorded specimens, the ballads most common have no refrains; a large number have elements of end refrain; a smaller number contain alternating internal refrain; some contain still other forms.

13. The music to which refrains are set has nothing about it, as a whole, to set it apart from other ballad music except its greater irregularity.

14. Irregularity in ballad melody is occasioned mainly by the variegated musical nature of refrain elements.

15. In the Child collection such a large proportion of refrains have been lost or altered that no conclusions about refrains based on these texts can correspond to the realities of folk-song.

The following opinions I have not attempted to establish as unquestionable facts:

1. A small number of melodies in eight measures should be read as musical couplets, the long phrases being the units.

2. Ballad melodies sometimes exhibit astonishing musical complexity and intelligence in their composition.

3. Any verse or verses unnecessary to the narrative, and added by way of ornament, or in keeping with the musical accompaniment, are elements of refrain.

I append here a short tabulated summary of the most common and characteristic structural types of melody in balladry, for the purpose of facilitating reference. Our main object so far has been to isolate the facts of their existence, and to become familiar with their fundamental forms and important qualities.

Their bearing upon the verse and stanza forms to which they are mated in folk-song is a matter of crucial significance in our subject, and later will bear the full brunt of investigation.

<u>TYPE OF MELODY</u>	<u>TYPE FORMULA</u>	<u>ILLUSTRATION</u>
1. Simple quadriphrasal	a b c d	Page 8
2. Simple five-phrase*	a b c d e	Page 17
3. Compound biphrasal	A B	Page 13
4. Compound triphrasal*	A B C	Page 16
5. Compound quadriphrasal	A B C D	Page 13
6. <u>Two Sisters</u> type*	a b c d e f g h	Page 18
7. End refrain types*	a b c d, or A B, plus re- frain a b, A B, or a b c d	Pages 18, 19, 21

#### CONCLUSION

The analysis just completed has attempted to explain and to illustrate the fundamental organization of ballad music. If it has succeeded, it has shown plainly the reality of the musical phrase, and how phrases are compounded and linked together in various characteristic ways to form rounded melody. One general consequence of these findings should be mentioned here, before taking leave of this phase of the subject.

It is useful to the analyst to study the morphology of folk-melody as a purely tonal matter, and we have frequently done so in the preceding pages. But, as has been said, the practice of folk-singers is not to separate music from text, but to sing both together as one. This cannot be done, however, unless the patterns of melody and language have been very closely adjusted to fit each other. A song, in fact, would be quite unsingable unless such an organic union had been achieved with a fair degree of success.

It is thus inevitable in any song that the structural members of text and tune should be exact counterparts of each other. The stanza, in singing, assumes the shape of the melody. It is equally just to say that the tune, in singing, assumes the shape of the stanza. Likewise the verse becomes one with the musical phrase, and the musical phrase an integral part of the verse. The mutual adaptation presupposes and is contingent upon a very close analogy of form and feature between the musical and poetic constituents of the song.

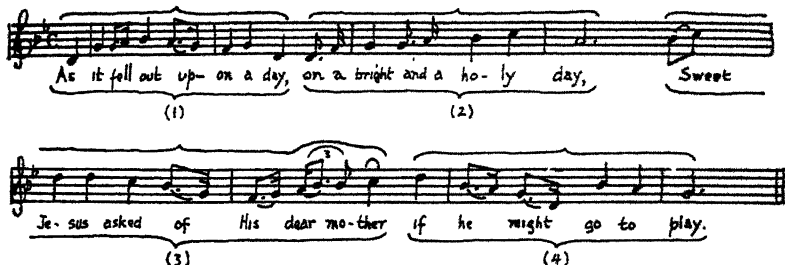
It is a nice question which of the two elements, music or language, has played the more influential part in moulding the ballad into its special and characteristic form -- a question to be probed into at a later time. What must be noticed particularly now is the analogy of organization itself, the fact that the tune and text, in essential matters, are morphological twins. The stanza is coterminous with the tune, the verses

\* Types normally involving refrain elements. (The above classes are not, of course, bounded by perfect compartments. There are exceptions and instances of overlapping.)

with the phrases, as can be verified at random among folk-songs, recorded or unrecorded. We may, for convenience, observe a single example here, not forgetting that what is true in this isolated instance is general law in folk-song. I have numbered off in order the musical phrases and their accompanying verses. The identification of stanza with tune, of course, needs no comment.

The Holy Well

J.F.S.S., Vol. IV, pp. 26-27.



When we say that this folk-song, in musical performance, is quadriphrasal, we are making a statement which holds for the language just as well as for the melody alone. The reader may compare with this song the illustration on pages 15, 17, and 18, showing other stanzaic patterns.

These facts are so plain, upon examination, as to appear rather obvious. They are, nevertheless, of basic importance to the understanding of the division of the folk-song into units of stanza, and these, in turn, into units of verse. In the last analysis stanza and verse are musical realities in folk-song. The natural parts of the music are the natural parts of the poetry. Phrasal divisions and terminations coincide in both. Manifestly any other mode or principle of division must be artificial and arbitrary.

The evidence of the chapter, then, furnishes the basis for the following generalization, to be consistently applied as a principle throughout the remaining chapters of the study: In folk-song stanza and verse are musical realities: melody and stanza are one and the same; musical phrase and verse likewise are one and the same.

A corollary follows, that when texts are abstracted from folk-songs, to be subsequently treated as poetry, the stanza and verse divisions of the poetry so derived can most accurately be determined and established by following closely the melodic structure of the music. This latter principle, however, involves complications which must be discussed at a later time.

Chapter Two  
THE SCANSION OF BALLAD VERSE

The present chapter for obvious reasons cannot attempt an exposition of English prosody. Neither can it, presume to any very elaborate theoretical explanation of a method of scansion. In view of the work already done by eminently capable students of prosody, an extended treatise of either sort would be out of place in the present dissertation, and unnecessary to it. For the use of any reader wishing to become more conversant with the general subject of rhythm in English verse, I can safely recommend the following works: Dr. William Thomson, The Rhythm of Speech (Glasgow, 1923); Professor M. W. Croll, The Rhythm of English Verse (Princeton, 1925);<sup>1</sup> K. M. Wilson, The Real Rhythm in English Poetry (Aberdeen, 1929).<sup>2</sup>

In the preceding chapter, dealing with folk-music, I have taken the notational system for granted. The civilized world, for one reason or another, has agreed to write and read its music by means of the staff and the note. The task immediately ahead would be greatly simplified if any such agreement existed in regard to the notation of metrical language. To the embarrassment of the investigator, the exact reverse is the case.

Despite the situation, if we are to attempt the criticism of ballad verse, or study the manifold rhythmic relations of text and melody, we must perforce employ some system for recording the facts of poetic rhythm. The scansion of ballad verse, in short, must be resolved into sense before real critical progress can be made.

As I have implied, English prosody, despite many notable achievements, has not yet been provided with any generally accepted vocabulary or technique of metrical symbols. This particular aspect of the subject, in truth, is and has been "bristling with difficulties" --any student of rhythm will vouch for the fact with melancholy gusto. About the various systems of poetic scansion practised or proposed, early and late, one might argue indefinitely.

Faced with a perfectly practical situation, I may be excused, perhaps, for being much impressed by one residual fact which appears to lie hidden under all argument and speculation, namely, that ordinary musical notation, with its corresponding terminology, furnishes at present the most convenient and accurate method so far devised by the human mind for graphically measuring and recording the duration of sound in conjunction with the facts of its rhythm. The time-proven efficacy of this machinery in music, coupled with its national and international currency as an analytical system, likewise, it appears to me, recommends it for employment. Accordingly, in the following pages we shall do the best we can with the methods and, in part at least, the terms of musical notation.

This preamble may possibly have the effect of making our

1

A multigraphed publication available at the Princeton University Store.

2

This volume, containing some curious misconceptions, also contains much valuable new material of a psychological nature, as well as some interesting speculations upon rhythm as a general cosmic and human phenomenon.

present subject seem more formidable than it deserves to be reckoned. Fortunately this dissertation requires manipulation of only the fundamental and important facts of rhythm, and these, I think I have good reason to hope, are not very hard to assign to their proper parts in the notational apparatus we are using.

#### STRESS AND MEASURE

In illustrating the application of musical notation to verse, I must assume some principles (especially those involved with the allocation of stress and measure) whose validity, in the last analysis, must be justified by reasoning and demonstration. The explanation of these principles may be found in the later chapter dealing specifically with measure and stress. The reader is advised to consult this chapter in connection with the present discussion if he wishes to examine the conceptions upon which it is built.

The rhythm of ballad poetry, as of all English poetry in metrical form, is fundamentally governed by the division of the line of verse into a series of equal time periods<sup>3</sup> marked by stresses.<sup>4</sup> For illustration of this basic fact let us glance at a line or two from the famous old ballad text of Sir Patrick Spens (Child 58G, stanza 15).

It's | <sup>x</sup>forty | <sup>x</sup>miles to | <sup>x</sup>Aber- | <sup>x</sup>deen,  
And | <sup>x</sup>fifty | <sup>x</sup>fathoms | <sup>x</sup>deep

The first line of verse above contains four rhythmic stresses, each marked by the superscript X. The second line contains three stresses, marked in the same way. Each stress, it will be noted, marks the beginning of a measure, as in music.<sup>5</sup> We do not, however, need any mark but the vertical bar to designate both the boundary of the measure and the stressed syllable with which it always begins. The superscript, that is, may conveniently be omitted altogether, the stress in every case striking the syllable immediately following the bar, precisely as it does in music.

It's | forty | miles to | Aber- | deen,  
And | fifty | fathoms | deep

3

Delicate mechanical tests show that even in music our psychological conceptions of time intervals are slightly inaccurate in a purely mathematical sense. See K. M. Wilson, The Real Rhythm in English Poetry, p. 43 ff. But to our normal senses the time periods of rhythm are felt as equal.

4

Various other terms are used (e. g. accent and ictus) to denote the same thing. For convenience, we shall adhere to the term stress.

5

The rhythmic time periods so marked could be called by the more common name of feet, but, as usually employed, the name foot designates different segments of the verse than those indicated here as natural divisions. To avoid possible misunderstanding we shall use the musical term.

The vertical bars, indicating as they do both the measures and the stresses, tell the most important facts about the rhythm of the verse. But they fall short of telling the whole story. They give us no information concerning the time arrangement of the syllables within each measure, and these syllables must be measured if our metrical account of the verse is to be a complete one.

Let us now, for convenience, switch to a different model, this time a verse from Robin Hood and the Tanner (Child 126, stanza 19). I shall first print the whole stanza, since the rhythm of a single line is best understood in its context.

And about, and about, and about they went,  
Like two wild bores in a chase;  
Striving to aim each other to maim,  
Leg, arm, or any other place.

This spirited narrative will, no doubt, do better service as a scientific example than as an esthetic achievement, but for the present purpose it is perfect of its kind. The third verse is the chief object of scrutiny.

| Striving<sup>(1)</sup> to | aim<sup>(2)</sup> each | other<sup>(3)</sup> to | maim<sup>(4)</sup>

If the four measures in the above verse are closely compared, several important observations can be made. First, the number of syllables in the different measures is not constant, but varied. Specifically, measures 4, 2, and 3 contain respectively one, two, and three syllables. In the second place, the relative length, or duration, of the syllables themselves also varies. For instance, in measure 2 the syllable aim is obviously longer<sup>6</sup> than the syllable each. A natural reading of the verse will show at once that such is the case. We have now arrived at a situation wherein symbolic notation must begin to play a more inclusive and perhaps more difficult part.

Let us assign the value of an eighth-note to each short syllable in the verse above. Measure 3, containing three short syllables, now contains three 1/8 units, and can be so represented in its context as follows:

| Striving<sup>(1)</sup> to | aim<sup>(2)</sup> each | other<sup>(3)</sup> to | maim<sup>(4)</sup>

And measure 1 can be represented in the same way. Applying the same scale to measure 2, two-eighths or one-fourth value must be allowed to its long syllable aim.

| Striving<sup>(1)</sup> to | aim<sup>(2)</sup> each | other<sup>(3)</sup> to | maim<sup>(4)</sup>

6

Throughout this dissertation the terms long and short, when applied to syllables, refer strictly to duration of time and to nothing else.

It may be asked here whether representing syllables in exact mathematical ratios, eighth, quarter, half, etc., is an accurate measurement of their real time values relative to each other, or merely an arbitrary convenience. In point of fact, neither is strictly true. It is evident from scientific observation that the human mind cannot, or at least in practice does not, make precisely accurate divisions of time, such as would be implied by the fractions used in musical notation. (Cf. note 3, page 28.) The symbols used are, to that extent, imperfect representations of fact, even in music itself. And yet they are successfully employed in that art to score not only simple melody but the most complex and subtle symphonic and contrapuntal effects. The essential point, of course, is that in matters of rhythm we are not dealing with mathematical perfection, but with adequate psychological perceptions. In music and verse we are obliged to employ mathematical ratios in order to determine measurement at all. Experience with English verse, ballad verse included, quickly teaches any one that the poetic measure, like the musical measure, has a rhythmic pattern of its own in the designation of which the symbols we are using are accurate enough to serve any practical purpose.

Though the measures scanned above differ in the number of their syllables, it will be seen that they are nevertheless all alike in the point of being divided according to a triplicate scheme. In each case the eighth-note is the unit; in measure 3 it occurs separately three times; in measure 2, two of the units are simply combined to form the longer note. In practice, however, measures are often encountered which follow neither of these patterns in their syllabication. The following verse, for example, from The Wife of Usher's Well (Child 79A, stanza 1) shows an obviously different arrangement in its first measure.

She | had three | stout and | stalwart | sons

In reading this verse aloud it will appear that the word three in the first measure (an important word in the verse) occupies no less time in its articulation than does the preceding word had. The time of the measure, in fact, is about equally divided between them. The musical device of the dotted note can, of course, be used to good effect in representing such a division of time.

She | had three | stout and | stalwart | sons  
           ♪       ♪

The three forms of syllabication shown in the various measures just analyzed are those most generally found in ballad verses. This is especially true with reference to the commonest of all stanza types, the so-called ballad stanza, from which the above examples have been taken. Measures often contain rests, and the rests vary in length; but no matter how built up, all of the measures in the verse occupy the same amount of time

in the reading.<sup>7</sup> This being true, the time signature can be worked out and set down as a fraction, as is done in music. In the verses we have been examining, for instance, each measure contains three eighth-notes, or their equivalent. The time signature therefore is  $3/8$ . In the familiar ballad stanza, and in some other stanza forms as well,  $3/8$  time is the rule. Besides  $3/8$  time there are other time signatures commonly found in ballad poetry, but we need not trouble to study them here, since they are later to be discussed in the chapter dealing specifically with the ballad measure.

## APPLICATION OF METHOD

It will be seen that our system of notation, as far as measurement of time is concerned, coincides precisely with that of music. Fortunately it is considerably simpler than musical notation, for some features and devices necessary to the latter may be eliminated. We have no use for the horizontal lines of the staff, nor for the designation of clef or key, since in representing the reading of poetry we need not be concerned with matters of pitch or melody. The time signature, the measures, and the notes are sufficient to indicate all essential facts of meter and rhythm in the verse. These musical contrivances, it seems to me, succeed astonishingly well in achieving an intelligible representation of what is, at best, a recalcitrant body of material.

Several points of explanation remain to be made, and in making them observation of a complete stanza will be required. The following model is from Child's The Wife of Usher's Well, 79A, stanza 1.<sup>8</sup>

$3/8$	There	lived	a	wife	at	Usher's	Well,
	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪. ♪.	♪
	And a   wealthy   wife was   she;   x						
	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪	♪ 7   x

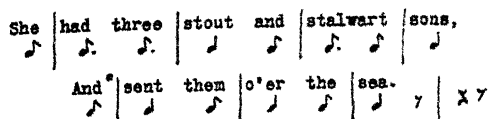
7

This statement is subject to the qualification, as it is in music, that variations of tempo, for purposes of expression, sometimes extend or shorten the actual time consumed in the reading of particular measures.

8

The reader unfamiliar with various methods of poetic scansion must be on guard against any possible confusion of technique with interpretation. The possibility of different (perhaps equally good) readings of a given stanza has nothing in the world to do with the question of the validity of the notational method we are employing. The scansion of the above stanza, for instance, is in no sense an effort to legislate an exclusively proper reading of it. It only serves to demonstrate how one reading (the present writer's) may be graphically represented. Any other reading, good or bad, could be equally well represented by the symbols. If, for example, some reader of the stanza should pronounce the word wealthy with dotted eighth-note value on each syllable (i. e. ♪. ♪.), as I have not done, there is no reason in the notational system itself why he should not do so and represent his reading accordingly. Scansion is nothing but a picture of sound. The question of good or bad scansion (i. e. good or bad reading) is another matter altogether, and one which will appear upon many occasions in later chapters. It is altogether irrelevant, however, to our present discussion.





The special objects of attention in this stanza are the rests and anacrusis, which have not so far been explained as parts of the notational scheme. We need not completely account for them here in theoretical detail as metrical phenomena—they are studied as such in a later chapter. One or two general observations will serve present purposes. Rests, as in music, are simply portions of regular measures not occupied by syllables, and in designating them we may use ordinary musical symbols, i. e.  $\times$  for the quarter-rest, and  $\gamma$  for the eighth-rest. The proper observation of rests, as will later be seen, is essential to the rhythmic structure of the stanza, and especially so in the case of stanzas having the pattern of the one shown above.

Anacrusis is the term generally applied to syllables occurring before the first rhythmic stress of the verse. In any notational scheme wherein the measures are conceived as beginning with the regular stress, anacrusis, as in music, is a commonplace element. Later we shall scrutinize it more carefully and closely. It should be noted in the above stanza, however, that the anacrustic syllables of the second, third, and fourth verses are, in the metrical pattern, properly to be regarded as continuations of the measures left uncompleted at the ends of preceding lines. That is, only the initial anacrusis in the first verse really stands outside the regular measures of the stanza.

We may now briefly summarize. The apparatus we are using will serve to mark (1) the number of verses in the stanza, (2) the number and position of stresses in each verse, (3) the number and boundaries of measures, (4) the timing of syllables in each measure, (5) location and duration of rests, (6) position and duration of extra-metrical syllables.

The following example will show how the rhythmic pattern of a folk-song may be represented by the simultaneous application of musical symbols to its text and to its melody.

#### The Outlandish Knight

Sharp, No. 11, p. 29. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.





This curious diagram is for purposes of illustration only. It shows the application of the notational system in a way calculated to make clear the close analogy between the two sets of phenomena to which it is applied. Needless to remark, the notes do not stand for the same absolute values in the text as they do in the music. Each notation is a closed system, but both function according to exactly the same principle.

# SYNCOPATION

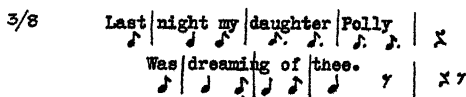
Syllables in ballad measures are not always naturally confined by the precise divisions of the bars. Occasionally they reach across from one measure into the next in such a way that the stress strikes somewhere in the middle of the word. This phenomenon is familiar in music as syncopation. It is a well established feature of ballad rhythm. Some of the most striking rhythmic effects of the poetry are contingent upon it. Where in balladry could one find a more poignantly beautiful thing, in a rhythmic way, than the final line of this stanza?

## The Green Bed

Campbell and Sharp, No.48, p.176. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

O come you home, dear Johnny,

O come you home from sea!



Syncopation plays its part in catching this haunting effect.

I have set down the syncopation above according to the form usual in music. Throughout the ensuing chapters I shall make note of syncopation in scansion wherever, as in the verse above, it assumes such importance that a natural reading becomes impossible without taking it into account. In many ballad verses syncopation is so slight and inconspicuous that, as a practical matter, it may be disregarded in notation. Not wishing to complicate machinery any more than is absolutely necessary, I shall in the pages to come disregard unimportant syncopations, as well as all other matters of slight significance, unless expressly dealing with them.

Perhaps an added word in connection with the latter state-

ment will not be out of place. The scansion of verse throughout the dissertation is purposely simplified, sometimes brutally so. In exhibiting or illustrating a particular effect, I have, as far as possible, disregarded in notation everything irrelevant to the point at issue. The scansions to follow are consequently, in many cases, rough sketches and nothing more. I mention this in advance as an explanation of some notations which might otherwise appear to be incomplete.

#### VERSE NOMENCLATURE

The critical handling of ballad verses varying in length is uncomfortably awkward without some method of reference to their individual forms. The most natural way to name such verses is to attach to them such terms as best describe their peculiarities. Professor Croll, in his treatise on rhythm, has answered the difficulty by naming verses according to the number of heard stresses which they contain.<sup>9</sup> In despair of finding or inventing a better method, I am gratefully availing myself of this one. As Professor Croll explains,<sup>10</sup> it is impractical to name verses by counting measures, for sometimes stanzas having equal numbers of measures to the line differ in their respective allocations of syllables among the measures. In process of analysis this situation would lead to hopeless ambiguity and confusion.

We shall therefore adopt the scheme of calling verses after the total number of their heard stresses. Two-stress verses are twos, three-stress verses threes, and so on. Examples:

Two: |Head me or|hang me

Three: She|steppit|on a|stane

Four: Sweet|Willie|was a|widow's|son

Seven: And|a' the|way he|walked on|foot, he|held her|by the|hand

In practical scansion the relative number of measures and heard stresses may be shown by parallel indices. The number of heard stresses will be marked by a number in parenthesis to the left of the verse. The number of measures in the verse will be indicated by a figure in parenthesis to the right. A closely coördinated observation of both (not the numbers but the facts represented by them) is often necessary to a good reading of rhythmic values. (Lamkin, Child 93A, stanza 1)

3/8	(4)	It's Lamkin was a mason good	(4)
		♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪	
	(3)	as ever built wi stane,   x	(4)
		♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪	
	(3)	He built Lord Wearie's castle  x	(4)
		♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪	
	(3)	but payment got he name.   x	(4)
		♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪	

<sup>9</sup>The Rhythm of English Verse, p. 30 ff.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. p. 30 ff.

The time signature is marked, without parenthesis, to the left. The above stanza, it will be seen, is built up of four verses, each of which contains four measures. The first verse contains four heard stresses, each of the following verses three heard stresses. Following our system of nomenclature, we may say that the stanza, as regards its verses, is made up of a four followed by a trio of threes. It is often convenient to designate the verse structure of a given stanza by using the figures alone. In the present instance this can be done by use of the simple formula 4.3.3.3. Such numerical formulas will be useful to our discussion from this point onward.

Analyzed and labelled in the fashion shown above, the rhythmic qualities of a ballad stanza are revealed definitely enough and accurately enough, I believe, to be studied both intelligently and -- with some reservations -- conveniently.

### Chapter Three THE STANZA: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the general discussion to follow I shall talk mostly about facts of the stanza which apply to it in a general way. That is to say, the term stanza itself, unless otherwise specified, will refer to the stanza both in and out of musical setting. Whenever it seems necessary to distinguish between the stanza of folk-song and the stanza of verbal text alone (i. e. when this distinction is not made clear by the context) I shall employ the terms song-stanza and text-stanza to designate the former and latter respectively. This use of terms, by the way, will be continued throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

The criticism of the stanza, needless to say, is inextricably involved with that of the verses which are set together to form it. Verses, we might say, do not constitute an independent subject for study as long as they are being looked at as constituent parts of a larger whole. I mention this in explanation of what, perchance, might at first appear to be an oversight, i. e. the failure of the verse to appear anywhere in our discussion as a chapter heading. The verse, as an independent unit, is given its share of attention in the later chapter devoted to ballad measure and stress.

#### ORIGIN OF THE STANZA AS A TRADITIONAL PATTERN

One of the most fundamental and difficult problems of ballad scholarship is that of the origin of the ballad tradition itself. I mean here by ballad tradition the habit of composing ballads according to an accepted structural pattern. Our documents show that such a pattern has existed, and has been faithfully followed by the makers and singers of ballads during the last six or seven centuries. How it first originated remains an unsolved mystery.<sup>1</sup> The cerebrations embodied in the ensuing paragraphs will not help much to rend the veil. But one slight contribution, I think, can be made in that direction.

One of the most important aspects -- if not the most important -- of the traditional ballad pattern is the conception of the stanza. Common as the stanza is not only to ballads but to all folk-song, it is of extreme significance in the early development of all of our poetry written according to strophic conceptions.

It is often supposed, by the nature of the case, that the ballad stanza must be linked somehow in its origin with traditional music. This, of course, is a likely conjecture. I believe, however, that it can be substantiated more strongly, clearly, and definitely by evidence and reasoning than has heretofore been attempted. The evidence grows out of one fundamental difference between the inherent character of musical expression and that of language.

All traditional music is melodic. But more important is the fact that all music in the English popular tradition is essentially alike in structural conception. The short phrase out of

1

This long-neglected problem was first isolated by Professor G. H. Gerould. See his discussion of it in The Ballad of Tradition, Chapter VIII.

which our ballad tunes are made is also the melodic unit of the folk-lyric, the carol, the dance air, the nursery song, and all other musical products of the folk. Everywhere in the musical tradition, these phrases, fundamentally alike in length and conception, are put together in the same characteristic ways to form proportioned melody. This universality of structural principle is a most important fact. It shows that the musical structure of ballad tunes is in no way connected with the narrative principle of their texts, but is governed by musical laws alone.

To this another important fact must be added. The short duration of folk-melody, and its consequent repetition, must be explained in terms of musical law. The melody must be short and unified, or else it is none. The records of tradition supply us with no examples of musical prose. No melody can have character or unity unless its scope is restricted to embrace a very few related phrases. Melody cannot by nature be continuous. Attempts to make it so always result, among the folk, in the creation of "circular" tunes, where repetition of the same melody is made easy by the transitional character of the concluding cadence.

In contrast to all of this, language, whether in prose or meter, is always, by its own inherent nature, continuous. The fact is proved in the traditional literatures of all the Indo-European peoples. A story, living in tradition as a phenomenon of language alone, never divides into regular stanzas, for there is no reason why it should do so, and every reason why it should not. But while language, when allowed its own free way, always tends to be continuous, it is structurally a much more flexible thing than melody. You can fit language to every form of melody; but by no means can you fit melody to every form of language.

All of these considerations point clearly, it seems to me, to the conclusion that, in the long course of evolutionary tradition during which the ballad genre was being developed, the stanza at some time was created by the coercion of language, against the force of its own native inclination, into short patterns coterminous with musical phrases. The emergence of the conception of the stanza furnishes us, amidst the tangled puzzle of the ballad tradition, one point at which a causal nexus can reasonably be established.

#### FUNCTION OF THE STANZA

From the standpoint of mechanical structure, and that alone, a ballad text is merely a collection of stanzas, which are analogous to the identical links in a chain. That is, the stanza is the fully developed structural unit, and ordinarily it simply repeats itself throughout the ballad without change of form, or with only slight changes. Not infrequently in the course of a text, a stanza will show variations in the number of measures in a verse, or in the rhythmic pattern of the measures. But relatively seldom does a stanza contain an irregular number of verses or any other structural abnormality which would require

the addition or subtraction of phrases in the musical accompaniment. It is probably true that the tunes, in traditional practice, have exerted a powerful influence toward the preservation of strict internal regularity of stanza form. As will presently be seen, singers have found it much easier to introduce changes of versification than to create fresh musical material to accommodate such alterations.

Odd versification within the ballad text, I have said, is not usual but abnormal. If you read through a text selected at random out of Child, or some other collection, the chances are enormously in favor of finding there a strict regularity throughout in stanza pattern. But to this general rule of uniformity there are numerous exceptions, and when these occur, they are most likely to assume one of several characteristic forms.

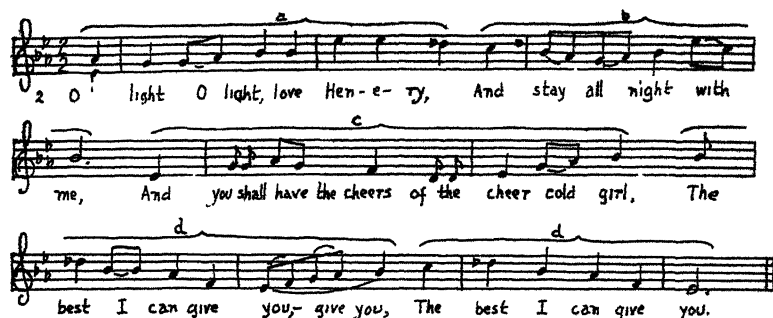
One of the least common of such stanzaic irregularities is the presence, in an opening stanza, of special introductory material, calculated, it would seem, to get the story started and under way. An interesting occurrence of this trick can be seen in Campbell and Sharp's variant of The False Knight, printed on page 23. Here a special verse (marked as such) precedes the beginning of the stanza proper, making a presumably necessary announcement, and the addition of a special musical phrase is required for its accommodation. An even more flagrant irregularity of the same kind is found in the following text of Young Hunting.

Young Hunting

Campbell and Sharp, No. 15D, p. 50. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

1. As La-dy Mar-gret was a-go-ing to bed, She heard the sound of a  
mu-si-cal horn, which made her heart feel glad and sad To  
think that it was her bro-ther John, bro-ther John, Com-ing in from his wild  
hunt. But who should it be but her true love Hen-e-ry, Re-  
turn-ing from his King, his King, Re-turn-ing from his King.

The second, and subsequent, stanzas are sung as follows:



Several things may be observed about this song. (1) The normal ballad tune (the text has thirteen stanzas) is in the pattern a,b,c,d,d, an example of simple five-phrase melody, to which is set a stanza of five verses, the last one being merely a repetition of the fourth, in the manner of a refrain. (2) The first stanza contains two extra verses, both contributory to the narrative, which must, in some way, be fitted into the tune. (3) The adjustment is accomplished by simply repeating phrases c,d,d of the tune, thereby prolonging it far enough to take care of all necessary words.

This situation illustrates the remark made a moment ago that singers find it easier to incorporate new verses of text into a stanza than to invent fresh melodic material to accompany them. It also illustrates the control over melodic form which the verbal text constantly exercises. Further illustration of both facts will appear incidentally many times in the ballad quotations that follow. Both facts have their explanation, at least partially, in the normal preoccupation of the singer with the ideas of his story. Collectors are in virtually unanimous agreement that the mind of the ballad singer, in process of singing, is usually unconscious of the tune, being concentrated, rather, upon the unfolding of the narrative.<sup>2</sup> This simple fact assumes importance in the study of ballad songs. It will account for numerous things which otherwise would look like accidents or fortuitous irregularities.

Cases like the one above, though not usual in balladry, are noteworthy. They appear to be an extreme result of a fairly common tendency, that among opening stanzas everywhere in tradition to be somewhat more irregular than their followers in the procession. The tendency is slight, usually involving only some roughness or ineptitude in minor details of form. Most ballads, in fact, are entirely free from anything of the sort. But on the whole it is noticeable enough to be properly spoken of as a

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See G. H. Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition*, p. 74. In his discussion of this point, Professor Gerould cites the opinions of B. M. Gra'ster, L. E. Broadwood, J. Tiersot, C. J. Sharp.



tendency. In Child's A-version of The King's Dochter Lady Jean (No.52), for example, the opening stanza runs as follows:

The kings young dochter was sitting in her window,  
Sewing at her silken sear,  
She lookt out o the bow-window,  
And she saw the leaves growing green, my luvie,  
And she saw the leaves growing green.

Redolent of the charm peculiar to ballad poetry, the stanza is rather disqualified for unfavorable comparison. But keeping cold-bloodedly to structural concerns, it will, I think, be allowed to be inferior in the matters of regularity, smoothness, and finish, to the fourth stanza of the same text, which better represents the prevailing pattern of the ballad.

'It's I will pu the nit,' she said  
'And I will bow the tree,  
And I will come to the merry green wud,  
And na ax leive o thes, my luvie,  
And na ax leive o thes.

Child's A-version of Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight (No.4) illustrates the same sort of thing, but we need not multiply examples here. There is a cogent saying to the effect that all beginnings are hard. Perhaps what we have been noticing, both trivial and radical irregularities of verse in opening stanzas, may be explained in terms of the psychological hazard inflicted by a relentless nature upon every "maker" when his mind becomes engaged in the first shock of battle against the passive resistance of his inert material. For after all, the ballad texts are products of the human mind, even though the mind of tradition is a mind of multiple activity.

There is also the possibility that, in some cases, the ineptitudes we have noticed are relics of bungling versification perpetrated originally by writers of broadsides. Once in oral circulation a broadside text of low quality would tend to improve in the direction of the traditional norm, but the improvement might operate least rapidly and successfully upon the opening verses of the text, on account of the natural psychological embarrassments described above. The reader will bear in mind, of course, that these remarks are mere conjecture.

A second oddity of versification, commoner than the sort just observed, is the addition of what might be called supernumerary verses at the end of the stanza proper. Sometimes one verse is added, but usually two. Sometimes only one stanza in the whole text shows the irregularity, sometimes several of them show it. A typical example of this curiosity can be found in the B-version of Child's Lady Maisry (No.65). This text, of twenty-seven stanzas, is entirely made up of the familiar "ballad stanza" except the seventeenth member, which violates the uniformity by possessing an extra pair of final verses.

## FUNCTION OF THE STANZA

'Your building is not broke,' he cried,  
'Nor is your towers won,  
Nor is your true-love delivered  
Of daughter nor of son;  
{ But if you do not come in haste, }  
Be sure she will be gone.'

The extra length of stanzas like this one obviously results from the singer's desire to group closely connected ideas together in places where it has not seemed easy or advisable to compose them into two separate stanzas. This can be seen clearly from the context of practically any ballad where the extra lines occur. Furthermore, the unity of the rhyme-scheme characteristic of such special stanzas indicates deliberate organization. The stanzas are not merely victims of accidental corruption or poetic cancer, but are conceived by the singers as unified wholes. They are far more abundant in Child than in the folk-song collections. This curious fact suggests the possibility that some of the instances in Child are not representative of the original songs, but have resulted from a rearrangement of verses by a reciter or recorder whose memory could not supply the pair of verses needed to complete a full-fledged second stanza. Some instances,<sup>3</sup> however, as the folk-songs show, are undoubtedly traditional.

It is a bit hard to explain how the singers contrived to extend their tunes in order to fit them to these irregular members. The available evidence indicates that the feat was generally accomplished by repetition of the latter half of the melody, i. e. of the segment following the medial cadence. I have never found a tune where this operation was indicated in the notation, but good reasons exist, nevertheless, for believing it to be a traditional habit.

In the first place, it is very easy to do. The materials are all ready to hand. The slight necessary adjustments of notes to words are no more difficult than what the singer is ordinarily accustomed to in the performance of any song-stanza. Again, such a procedure is the most natural and obvious way out of trouble. It is much easier to repeat a familiar set of phrases than to invent a new set. Besides, the repeated phrases could be freshened by variations, and the average singer is adept at contriving minor original features of that sort. (The ballads in Campbell and Sharp, where all such variations are carefully recorded, show that they are usual, rather than exceptional, in the performance of folk-songs. For the most part, melodies are not sung throughout a ballad in exactly the same form for all stanzas.) A third -- perhaps most important -- point is that the practised ballad singer is quite familiar with precisely

3

To any one accustomed to reading the Child ballads the irregular six-line stanza must be a familiar feature. But it is by no means a usual feature, and its interesting occurrence in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is one plain testimony, among others, that the author of that splendid literary work possessed a thorough and accurate knowledge of the traditional form which he was imitating.

this mode of repetition in his tunes of the A,B,B pattern discussed in an earlier chapter. (See page 16 ff.)

Sharp's disposal of the irregular six-line stanza in Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians lends, I think, undeniably strong support to the above hypothesis. For example, he prints such a stanza in The Suffolk Miracle (No. 31B, p. 131), but provides no special music for it, and -- strangest of all -- no comment. I judge from this he took it for granted that his readers would understand the necessity for phrasal repetition in rendering the song, and would act accordingly. Sharp, needless to say, was too acute a critic and too meticulous an editor to have overlooked a musical peculiarity of this importance. Seven other ballads in the same collection have the same irregularity, Nos. 3, 12, 36, 39A, 39B, 52, 54. Some of the stanzas concerned have only one additional verse, but all are treated in the same way, and no doubt all are meant to be sung by use of the same technique of phrasal repetition, though in cases where only a single verse is added, of course only the final short phrase would need to be repeated.

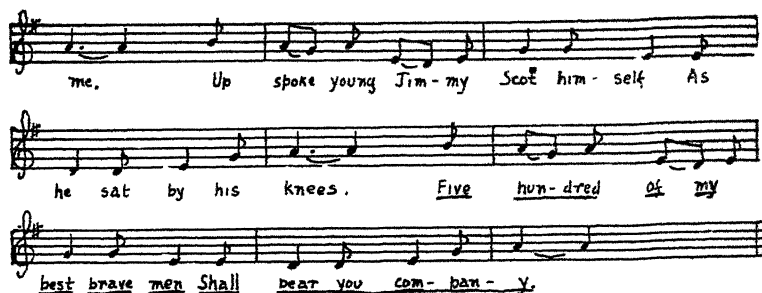
Significant, too, in this connection, is No. 25 in the same volume. Here the extra two verses of an odd stanza (stanza No. 2) take the place of an end refrain used in connection with every other stanza in the song. (It may be that some of the texts in Child were traditionally constructed in this manner, the refrain lines being somehow lost, while the narrative lines, necessary to the story, were retained.) I print for comparison the first two stanzas of this ballad.

#### Johnie Scot

Campbell and Sharp, No. 25, p. 109. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

1 When John-ie Scot saw this big, broad let-ter, It caused him for to  
smile, But the ve-ry first line that he did read, The  
tears run down for a while, But the ve-ry first line that  
for 9 stanzas / last time  
he did read, The tears run down for a while.

2. A- way to old Eng-land I must go, King Ed-wards has sent for



Of lesser importance are several other recurrent forms of stanzaic abnormality, which may be noticed briefly in passing. Already illustrated and commented upon are the opening stanzas among whose lines extra verses have been interpolated (see page 38). As has been said, such added verses are evidently inserted for the sake of their contributory ideas.

But interpolated extra verses do not always contribute to the story, nor are they to be found, without exception, in opening stanzas. In the following text, for example, stanzas 8, 12, 13, and 14 (the ballad contains a total of fourteen) each contains an extra line, interposed within the stanza, and fitted with a special musical phrase, the latter built up, as usual, out of the stock ideas of the melody.

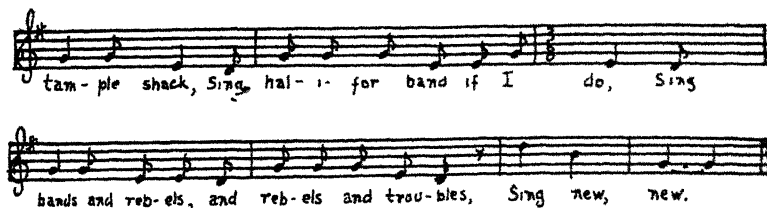
The Farmer's Gurst Wife

Campbell and Sharp, No. 34A, p. 139. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

(first stanza)  
 1. There was an old man who fol-lowed the plough, Sing Hal-i-for band if I  
 do, Sing bands and reb-els and reb-els and trou-bles Sing new, new

(stanzas 2-7 and 9-11)  
 2. He drove six ox-ens and an old cow, Sing nick-el, sing nack-el, sing  
 new, Sing bands and reb-els, and reb-els and troubles Sing new new

(Stanzas 8, 12, 13 and 14)  
 3. He picked her up all on his back, And a-way ne went to old



I have printed not only an example of the odd text-stanzas alluded to, but also stanza 2, in which, though the text-stanza is mechanically normal, the tune is somewhat different in its opening phrase. It will be seen, too, that stanza 2 contains a variant set of nonsense words in the second verse. (Stanzas 3-7 and 9-11 also follow this form, as indicated in score.) All in all, this ballad is fairly replete with irregularities. One can best account for them, no doubt, by supposing that they grow out of sheer love of variety. It might be added that this general sort of irregularity is more prevalent among ballads collected in southeastern United States than among those gathered from any other locality in the English-speaking world.

In the following ballad of nine stanzas, Nos. 5, 6, and 9 contain interpolated lines. In this instance, however, refrain lines of a sort. These are melodically accommodated by the curious insertion of a pair of phrases at the beginning of the tune.

#### The Golden Vanity

Campbell and Sharp, No. 35B, p. 143. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

1. There was a lit-tle ship in the North A-mer-i-kee, She went by the  
name of the Golden Willow Tree, As she sailed in the Low-lands low.  
(Stanzas 5, 6, and 9)  
5. He turned on his back and a-way swam he, Crying: O this  
Low-land lies so low. He turned on his breast and a-  
way swam he, He swam till he came to the  
Turkey Silver-y, As she sailed on the Low-lands low.

As in the two examples just shown, the text of the following ballad is divided between two tunes, each slightly different from the other, yet fundamentally the same. A special exception occurs in the second stanza. The second verse of this member is abnormally short; hence its musical phrase is abruptly curtailed to fit. The apocopeation throws the musical phrasing out of rhythmic balance, but the singer (cf. "curtailed phrase") has attempted to offset this awkwardness by prolonging the final note of the phrase. We see here another manifestation of the dictatorial power exercised by the text-stanza over its musical counterpart. Important, too, is the fact that the two-stress verse in question must be recognized as a textual corruption. It is plain to be seen that whenever the meter of a text-stanza is faulty, the rhythmic quality of the melody is liable to suffer as a consequence.

Sir Hugh, or, The Jew's Daughter  
Smith, pp. 148-149. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

(First stanza)

1. It rained, a-las! It rained, a-las! It sprinkled all o-ver the town Two  
little boys went out to toss a ball; To toss a ball

(Second stanza)

2. At first they tossed the ball too high, And then too low; And  
then they tossed it in-to a yard where no one was a- lowed to go

(Stanzas 4, 5, 6, and 3)

4. "Oh, no! Oh, no! I can't come in, Un-less my playmate comes too; for  
when little boys come in your door, They never come out any more."

A final example will show the manner in which fairly regular text-stanzas in one and the same ballad are sometimes set to slightly different tunes. (For illustration of this peculiarity among Scottish ballads see Trooper and Maid, Greig, No. CVIIIb, p.247.)

The Maio Freed from the Gallows  
Smith, pp. 81-82. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

1 "Hangman, hangman, howd yo hand, O howd it far and wide! For  
theer I see my fey-ther coom - in, Rid - ing through the air

2 "Feyther, feyther, ha yo brot me goold? Ha yo paid my fee? Or  
ha yo coom to see me hung Be - neath tha hangman's tree?"

3 "I ha naw brot yo goold, I ha naw paid yo fee, But  
I ha coom to see yo hung Be - neath the hangman's tree"

The musical notation consists of five staves of music in a single system. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written on a five-line staff. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words aligned with specific notes and others spanning across measures. The first staff contains the first line of the first verse. The second staff contains the second line of the first verse. The third staff contains the first line of the second verse. The fourth staff contains the second line of the second verse. The fifth staff contains the third line of the second verse. The music is written in a simple, folk-like style with a clear melody and a steady rhythm.

We have seen enough to summarize: Whenever irregularities of versification occur in the ballad text, the tune is prolonged, shortened, or otherwise correspondingly adjusted by means of repetition, transposition, or other manipulation of its phrases. New musical ideas are not employed for the purpose; the custom is to expand or rearrange the material at hand.

In an earlier part of the chapter I have intimated that such a conservatism of musical ideas might be construed as a natural mode of following the line of least resistance. No doubt that is true. But the tendency may have another explanation as well. It may grow, in part, out of the instinct for preserving the character of the melody, something which would be altered, perhaps destroyed, by exposure to the introduction and intermixture of totally new musical expressions.

It was mentioned a moment ago that departures from the norm of versification are to be found more commonly among the Southern ballads than elsewhere. Without resorting to statistics it is safe to say, in general, that the British and Scottish (especially the Scottish) songs adhere more closely to the normal stanza pattern than do the American (especially the Southern) ballads. The disparity cannot at present be wholly explained, I suppose, but there are two matters which seem to have an important bearing upon it. One of these is the unquestionably inferior poetic quality of many American texts. Professor Gerould has written as follows concerning "the state of the ballads

collected in such extraordinary numbers among our American mountaineers:

"Very seldom do the words have the magic of phrase and of subtle rhythm that is characteristic of the ballad at its best. Structurally they are often very good, by which I mean that the stories are well told, but the texture of the verse is in general rather thin and poor. The melodies, on the other hand, are often exceedingly beautiful, and so multiform in their variations that one cannot fail to see in them the traditional art of the singer unaffected by passage of time or pioneer emigration. It is as if uprooting the stock from the old country and moving about from place to place before it came to rest, subjecting it to new experiences and a strange environment, had greatly injured taste and the power of good individual variation, as far as the words are concerned, whereas the art of musical accompaniment, less easily affected by new influences, had kept the qualities developed by many generations of singers on the other side of the sea."<sup>4</sup>

A deterioration of taste operates not only to lower the poetic level of the normal text, but the level of the poorest texts as well. It works throughout the scale. In the poorest texts, however, corruptions are more flagrant than elsewhere, and are therefore more likely to extend to the rhythmic and metrical structure, producing malformations of the sort illustrated above on page 45. These, in turn, are likely to react upon the musical accompaniment. Such a reaction may possibly work an injury to the quality of the melody, as was shown to be true (see page 45) in one stanza of Sir Hugh. But, on the other hand, it does not invariably result in a damaged tune. The structure of melody is, in principle, so rigid that even slight rhythmic ineptitudes are certain to protrude conspicuously. This the singers must feel very keenly, for they obviously try hard to prevent its happening. We have witnessed one instance of such an effort in the stanza from Sir Hugh printed above. On page 46 a most interesting case in point may also be studied. This ballad is a Virginia variant of The Maid Freed from the Gallows. The first line of the second stanza is one measure longer than the norm; the second line is normal in meter. What melodic disposition is to be made of the extra measure? The singer has employed a very extraordinary strategic shift. He has carried over the word goold into the adjacent phrase, and then caught up again by hurrying rapidly over the two syllables Ha yo, reducing their time values each to 1/8. (Otherwise they would both be crotchets.) The result is a singable stanza, and a striking one at that. Here failure to compose a regular metrical stanza has resulted in a most interesting, unusual, and not unsuccessful variation.

Instances of this kind show, in an interesting light, the nature of the interaction between text-stanza and melody. While the text, holding the sense of the story, maintains a structural hegemony over its accompaniment, the latter exercises an influ-



ence toward the preservation of the structural norm, for the musical taste of the singers is manifestly so sound, on the whole, that they constantly seek to avoid melodic clumsiness.

The second matter bearing upon the structural waywardness of the mountain tunes has likewise been mentioned above: the love of variety. I believe that it must play a rôle. No one can make an extended reading of Greig's Last Leaves or of the ballads in the Journal of the Folk-Song Society, and then turn his attention to the contents of Campbell and Sharp, or Smith, without being struck by a contrast relating not only to structural regularity, but to feeling and spiritual attitude. On the whole the English and Scottish ballads from the old world are prevaillingly sorrowful and tragic, and almost universally serious. With the mountaineers all of this is slightly and subtly different. True, the same tragic themes are common enough. But they are often handled with a lighter touch. There is a discernible penchant among the Southern folk-songs toward the comic, even the burlesque. One can realize these differences in the contrast of tone between the following two variant stanzas of The Farmer's Curs't Wife. Both are opening stanzas, the first from Child, No. 278A.

There was an old farmer in Sussex did dwell,  
(Chorus of whistlers)

There was an old farmer in Sussex did dwell,  
And he had a bad wife, as many knew well.  
(Chorus of whistlers)

The stanza I have chosen for comparison comes from Campbell and Sharp, No. 34B, P. 140. (Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

There was an old man lived under the hill,  
Sing ti-ro rattle-ing day,  
If he ain't moved away he's living there still,  
Sing ti-ro rattle-ing day.

To any one who knows at first hand the independent character and racy humor of the mountaineers, or has seen the character of these people realistically portrayed, as it is done in Hatcher Hughes' play Hell Bent fer Heaven, a stanza like the one above is no matter for surprise. It is thoroughly characteristic of the backwoodsman's weltanschauung. He is a descendant of pioneer stock, living often amid wild natural surroundings, isolated from cultural influences, faithful to local traditions which have grown up about him as an answer to the circumstances of his life, traditions, in part, of a cavalier personal individualism best symbolized by the polished shotgun resting (unless in use) on a convenient gun-rack. To compare this figure with the shrewdly conservative Scotch peasant, tilling the soil in the heart of a long-established civilization, is to understand more clearly than otherwise, though vaguely, some of the characteristic differences between the folk-songs emanating from either source. In short, some of the departures which the

ballad-singing mountaineer makes from ancient traditional forms are not, in a true sense, corruptions, but variations which are natural to the complexion of his mind and personality.

After so detailed a discussion of the extraordinary, it may restore the sense of balance and proportion to recall the original point of the present sub-chapter, that overwhelmingly the rule in balladry is rigid internal regularity of stanza. Among the Robin Hood group in Child -- where structural evenness, for some reason, reaches a high level of perfection -- one often reads through ballads of half a hundred metrically identical stanzas. As a mechanical accomplishment, the ballad is, on the whole, truthfully represented by the afore-mentioned analogy of the links in a chain.

#### TRANSITION WITHIN THE BALLAD

The stanzas in the verbal text of an uncorrupted ballad are always connected with each other by the thread of narrative, or by dialogue, so as to form a coherent sequence. But aside from these rather loose affiliations of idea, one may search in vain for any device which serves the purpose of binding them together or bridging the gaps -- often extensive ones -- between them. Even in ballads of the highest poetic value, one can discover no deliberate rhetorical or structural means of inter-stanzaic transition. There are no "run on" lines between stanzas, such as occasionally turn up in poems written by literary artists who have been adapting the "ballad stanza" to their own purposes. The end refrains, common among the texts, serve as an ornamental conclusion to the stanza, but in no way affect or predetermine the beginning line of the stanza to follow, and therefore cannot be regarded in any sense as transitional elements. The text-stanza, in brief, is always structurally self-contained, never tentacular or transitional.

The explanation of such concentration of emphasis in the stanza is clearly to be found in the fact of its musical accompaniment. Professor Gerould has explained this point in his discussion of the ballad as a narrative art.<sup>5</sup> I quote the passage in question. Its criticism is aimed at the ballad as a whole, but its implications, of course, embrace the separate members out of which the whole is constructed.

"The musical form [of the ballad] is lyrical; it is a song. Under such conditions the tendency to focus the story rather sharply on some central point is easy to explain. A sweep and flow of narrative is held in check by the musical iteration. In order to get the story told at all, it has to be told at not too great length; and in order to get it told effectively, non-essentials have to be eliminated. The nature of his musical setting has forced the folk-singer, in other words, into habits of narrative to which Boccaccio and Chaucer and Maupassant attained, being men of genius, by trying along the lines of literary tradition to make the most of their story material. More or less successfully, the story in our ballads is concentrated

<sup>5</sup>

The Ballad of Tradition, p. 37.

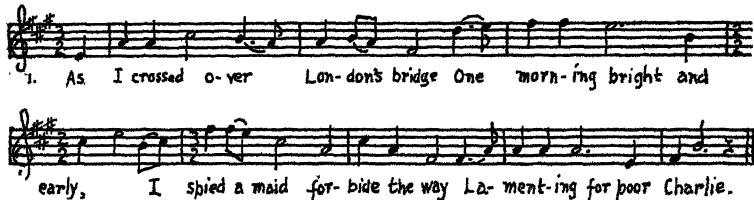
about a single situation, and as little else is told as may be."

Concerning the stanza alone, the matter may, perhaps, be brought to a point in this way: Normally the ballad melody is complete in itself, its concluding cadence bringing it to a stop with no uncertain sense of musical finality. It is natural, in ballad performance, that the same feeling should attach to the song-stanza as belongs to its melody alone. Conflict between text and tune in such a crucial affair is artistically inconceivable. As a result, the composer of the stanza is irresistibly led to envision and to execute it in ideas and language commensurate with its musical unity.

I have stated that structural means of transition are not to be found in the verbal texts. The case is somewhat different, however, with the tunes, among which can sometimes be found a transitional mechanism of a decidedly definite order. This is the (rather rare) occurrence at the end of a melody of what we have termed an imperfect cadence. Such a cadence does not lead back to the tonic, and so produces no effect or feeling of conclusion. Instead of doing so, it leaves the ear unsatisfied while it prepares the way for a fresh beginning of the same tune.

#### Geordie

Campbell and Sharp, No. 28A, p. 117. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



In the tune above the tonic is A, but the final note is one tone above it in the scale. In the actual performance of this, or any such, ballad, the force of the transitional element would be felt as part of the folk-song as a whole, rather than as merely belonging independently to the music. In other words, the element truly belongs, in the oral sense, to the song-stanza. We see, in such cadences, a genuine transitional device, but as far as I can discover, it is the only kind known to balladry.

Tunes of this sort are generally known as "circular tunes." They appear to be most common among the pentatonic melodies from southeastern United States. (See Sharp's discussion in English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Introduction, p. xviii.) Sharp observes the curious fact that the mountaineers, in their singing of ballads set to circular tunes, almost never take pains to vary the last cadence in the final repetition so as to conclude, at the very end, on the tonic. In other words, they leave the music, as we ordinarily think of it, uncompleted. It seems to me possible, even probable, that their

familiarity with gapped scales and purely melodic (i. e. non-harmonic) music has resulted in a conception or feeling of modality quite different from that common to persons whose ears have been trained to the cadences of harmonic composition. I have noticed, among mountain singers of eastern Tennessee, that individuals who habitually perform to the simple harmonic accompaniment of the guitar usually render their songs in the major scale.

## REGULARITY AMONG TEXTS

By and large, the stanza types throughout the range of English balladry exhibit a generic similarity of form which is sure to strike the eye on the printed page, or the ear in the hearing of ballad recitation. The general resemblance is neither superficial nor accidental. It would be strange indeed if this were not encountered everywhere in ballad structure, which has been, in the long run, determined by a traditional technique of singing operating upon fairly rigid principles. Family resemblance among stanza types has frequently been commented on, notably by Gummere.<sup>6</sup> It is generally supposed that the "ballad stanza," glorified by literary imitation, is the characteristic pattern of our English texts. This notion is a trifle inaccurate, but in the main it is right. I believe the stanzas of balladry have acquired their reputation for sameness and regularity because the overwhelming majority of them occur in one of two forms so closely similar that the unobservant would usually overlook their difference. These two characteristic patterns we shall presently examine. Stanzas not belonging to these usual types are in a small minority numerically; but among themselves such stanzas show an astonishing freedom and variety of pattern. In fact, they elude anything like complete orderly classification.

## MUSIC OF THE STANZA

Much of what has been said in general about the formal relationships of stanzas will hold equally true with regard to their accompanying tunes. Between the two prevails a natural, obvious, and close analogy. Like the stanza, the melody is one link in a chain of units similarly constructed. The melody may, and usually does, show some irregularities in the course of its repetition, but never does it surrender its identity. Whatever morphological gyrations it may perform, it still remains fundamentally the ballad tune, its shifts and fluctuations are all, in a manner of speaking, generated from the same musical germ plasm. It is as impossible to conceive of two fundamentally distinct tunes used in singing segments of the same ballad as it is to imagine the embodiment of two separate stories in the same text.

In spite of these obvious facts, to speak of a ballad tune

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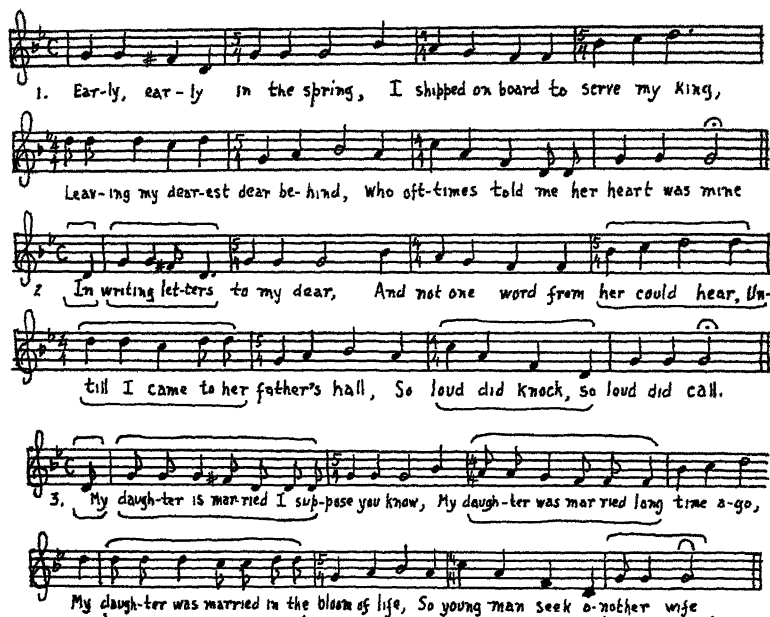
This critic was much impressed by the apparently almost uniform metrical patterns among the ballad texts which he had examined. See The Popular Ballad, p. 325.

is to use an expression which, in a minute analysis, can be seen to need two important qualifications. The first has to do with syllabication, the second with melodic variation. In ballad singing, both are axiomatic matters, but this fact does not mean, I think, that we should entirely overlook them in this account of ballad structure.

Most folk-songs, it is true, are published with only one recorded tune, usually that fitted to the opening stanza. But if one attempts to sing all the stanzas of the ballad to the notes provided in such a tune, one generally discovers immediately that the feat is either very awkward or practically impossible. Syllabic patterns in folk-song do not often conform precisely to a standardized scheme of arrangement, with the result that the distribution of words over the tune usually varies, in its patterns, with each new stanza. The variation may be very slight, or, in exceptional cases, so radical as to render the fitting of words to melody a difficult task. In our limited space we need not trouble here to study exceptional situations. The following stanzas will serve to show, albeit in a rough way, the sort of syllabic redistribution, and the amount of it, ordinarily involved in the singing of what might be called an average folk-song. For convenient reference I have marked with brackets the passages where syllabic changes occur.

Early, Early in the Spring

Sung by Mr. Seth G. Stockbridge of Swan's Island, Maine, August, 1931



1. Ear-ly, ear-ly in the spring, I shipped on board to serve my King,  
Leav-ing my dear-est dear be-hind, Who oft-times told me her heart was mine

2. In writing let-ters to my dear, And not one word from her could hear, Un-  
till I came to her father's hall, So loud did knock, so loud did call.

3. My daugh-ter is mar-ried I sup-pose you know, My daugh-ter was mar-ried long time a-go,  
My daugh-ter was married in the bloom of life, So young men seek a-nother wife

In the remaining four stanzas of the ballad(which I have not thought it necessary to print) the same characteristic adjustments, of course, may be seen. Added illustration may be found in the stanzas from Johnie Scot (p. 42) or in those from The Farmer's Curs'd Wife(p. 43) or in practically any recorded folk-song. Obviously the best method of studying syllabic distribution consists in singing through all the stanzas of an entire ballad, in the course of which all of the redivisions must actually be made in concrete reality.

The matter of melodic (i.e.tonal) variation has already come up in connection with our discussion of stanzaic abnormalities (p. 38 ff.) In that discussion it was observed (1) that added musical phrases, though formed of the basic stuff of the tune, often show variations, and (2) that even in a sequence of fairly regular stanzas (p. 45 ff.) slightly variant tunes sometimes appear in the same ballad. All of the melodies provided to illustrate these principles, however, were advanced as exemplars of the unusual, not of the commonplace. Even the variations in The Maid Freed from the Gallows (p. 45 ff.) were somewhat radical and not altogether unattended by oddities of versification.

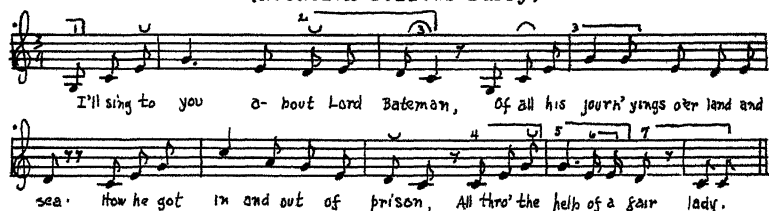
Melodic variation, however, is not restricted in its occurrence to the realm of the extraordinary. It occurs commonly in tunes set to perfectly regular stanzas, though in these instances it is usually less emphatic than when associated with stanzaic oddities of the sort studied above. Slight melodic variation from stanza to stanza is neither universal nor extraordinary; perhaps we might do best to call it characteristic. It is sometimes disregarded by collectors, but the accurate recordings of Mr. George Herzog (I refer to the notations made by this musician in Barry.) and C. J. Sharp show that failure to take it into account amounts to a decidedly inaccurate method of notation, and this applies to folk-songs both in America and across the sea.

The characteristic variations of which I am speaking can only properly be understood by a rather extensive observation of them as heard in actual singing, or as seen in the pages of collections where such phenomena are accurately set down. Lack of space obliges us here to confine attention to a single example. I have chosen a tune whose variations are somewhat more numerous than is usual, in order to provide a maximum of typical instances in a minimum of space.

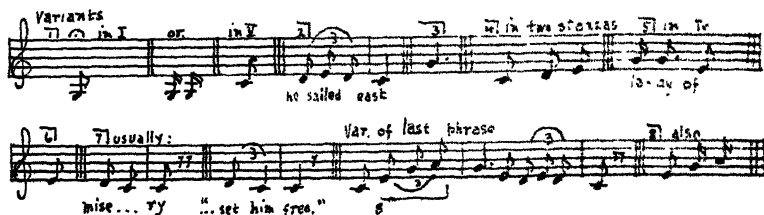
Lord Bateman

Barry, No. E, p. 119. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press

(Notation follows Barry)



I'll sing to you a- bout Lord Bateman, Of all his jour'n' yings o'er land and  
sea. How he got in and out of prison, All thro' the help of a sair lady.



Sharp, I believe, was first to recognize the true traditional significance of these tonal fluctuations, though it is now fully realized by all competent critics. Let me quote in passing a relevant remark by Barry:

"It is precisely through the tradition of these variations, slight, or noteworthy, as the case may be, that different versions of a melody are assisted to be developed in the course of traditional singing. Thus, for example, if a ballad show variations in the melody, as set to the first and fourth stanzas when sung, these variations may undergo fixation independently in the memory of different persons who hear the ballad sung, so that, as a result of learning the ballad from a singer who varied the air in different stanzas, other singers will set the whole ballad to one or another of the variations. The process will go on indefinitely, -- each singer will vary the air as he sings the ballad, stanza by stanza, and, no doubt, quite unconsciously."<sup>7</sup>

The causes of these seemingly fortuitous variations make up a complex and interesting critical problem which has already received skillful attention from previous investigators. Perhaps the last word on this question has not yet been said, but my own inquiries, at least, have succeeded in ferreting out little or nothing to add to the explanations already advanced by C. J. Sharp and Professor Gerould.<sup>8</sup>

7

British Ballads from Maine, Int., p. xxxi.

8

Discussions of this phase of the subject may be found in English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions, pp. 23 - 28, and in The Ballad of Tradition, pp. 77-78. In his account of such melodic changes Sharp mentions five causes, and adds the opinion that others exist. It is hard to summarize these in a phrase without risk of misrepresentation, but, warned in advance of this danger, the reader may gain a rough idea of their nature from the following enumerations: (1) spontaneous invention by gifted singers, (2) simple love of ornament, (3) change of mode, (4) adaptation of a known air to a new text, (5) metrical or other corruptions resulting from faulty memory or some other cause. (It should be remembered, of course, that variations such as these, as far as we know, are not as a rule made consciously by the singers, but are made rather instinctively and spontaneously.)

To the above explanations Professor Gerould adds a sixth: "...any change in the words of a ballad, even though it does not involve irregularities of rhythm but merely a shift of phrase within the limits of the pattern, is sure to produce some variation in the melody, since...the air is a musical accompaniment and must respond to the cadences of the verse." (Op. cit., p. 78.)

Involved in this general principle is the possibility that the meaning of a given word or phrase may effect tonal changes. For instance, the pitch

It may be said in summary, then, that the melody set to a regular and normal stanza is subject to individual peculiarities both of syllabication and tone-pattern, the first sort being occasioned and controlled by the distribution of syllables in the poetry of the text, to which the music obviously must correspond, the second sort usually (though not always) having no connection with the language at all.

## STABILITY OF STANZA AND MELODY

The stability of refrain patterns in traditional circulation has already been commented on (cf. p. 20). As one would suppose, what is true of refrains in this particular is likewise true of the stanza in general, since the refrain is, after all, a part of a stanzaic organization. Stanzaic pattern, in fact, is one of the most persistent things in folk-song tradition. Among the variants of some ballads it appears well-nigh indestructible. I have cited in a previous connection the example of Lord Lovel (cf. p. 20), and other instances could be added indefinitely to show the same strong tendency toward structural preservation. It is not unusual to find, among the recorded variants of a ballad, a complete stanzaic uniformity.<sup>9</sup> Such is the case with

elevation of the important word hung in stanza 2 of The Maid Freed from the Gallows (p. 46 above) may conceivably have been influenced by the sense-pattern of the verbal phrase. Both elevation and prolongation of the note might have been unconsciously employed to enhance the effect of emphasis.

I might add here a surmise of my own which is not a theory but only a suspicion -- perhaps a mistaken one. I have long suspected, but have found no way of definitely proving, that phrases in folk-melody are sometimes changed by a species of contamination, in which the singer, uncertain of a phrase, or led to error by a resemblance of form, unconsciously substitutes a melodic figure from another song. I have observed this to happen so many times in the casual singing of songs other than folk-songs that I cannot avoid supposing that ballads are not immune to it. Davis's Lass of Roch Royal (No. 21, p. 575) seems, indeed, to be a genuine example. The first two phrases, words and music, are almost identical with those of the old popular song "There is a Tavern in the Town." But of course one cannot be quite certain which has borrowed from the other. That one or the other has done so is patent, nevertheless. Compare also Smith's The Maid Freed from the Gallows (shown on p. 46) with "Oh, Suzanna."

9

To assist the reader in forming an opinion of the observations above and to follow, I think it advisable here to mention briefly the material from which they have been drawn. I have assembled the available printed variants of 25 ballads, choosing as far as possible those which at the present time appear to have a fairly wide circulation. Those represented are Barbara Allen, The Wife Wrapped in Wether's Skin, Lord Randal, Earl Brand, The Gypsy Laddie, The Cruel Mother, The Two Sisters, The Lass of Roch Royal, The Farmer's Cursed Wife, Bruton Town, Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight, The Golden Vanity, Lord Bateman, The Shooting of His Dear, The Wife of Usher's Well, The Maid Freed from the Gallows, Lady Alice, Geordie, The Two Brothers, Lord Lovel, The Cherry Tree Carol, The Baffled Knight, The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington, The Bitter Withy, Fair Margaret and Sweet William. The sources of the variants are listed in the bibliography.

For several ballads I have been able to secure something over 50 variants, these of course coming from various parts of the United States and the British Isles. Barbara Allen, perhaps nowadays the most popular of all English ballads (certainly so in this country) has yielded a total of 61. Only a majority -- often a scant majority -- of the variants are complete in the sense of representing both text and tune, so that the actual material



the 16 variants I have assemoled of Earl Brand; even the wording of some stanzas is virtually standard throughout the set. Among 32 variants of The Twa Sisters a large majority preserve the very complex stanzaic figure characteristic of that ballad. Three-score variants of Barbara Allen show scarcely a single divagation from the norm. Of course this is not to say that irregularities among the different versions are not sometimes numerous. For instance, the variants of The Gypsy Laddie show several stanza forms. Sometimes as many as a half-dozen different patterns will turn up. But the general rule is fairly strict conformity to a characteristic stanza pattern.

In addition to the undoubted tendency among singers to remember verse patterns well and transmit them unchanged, there appear to be at least two contributory reasons for this state of affairs. One of these is to be found, I believe, in the attitude of the singer toward his ballad story, a habit already cited in connection with other explanations. He is customarily preoccupied with the central situation of the tale, and with the progressive unfolding of its sequence of details. Comparative records show us that the narrative structure is generally very well remembered, surviving long spans of time and extensive geographical dispersion. The usual accuracy with which these ideas are remembered must work favorably toward the continuous conservation of the verse and stanza patterns in which the ideas are embodied. No important change is possible in verse or stanza without change of language, which in turn must, in some degree, affect the ideas whose integrity the singer is actively interested in preserving intact. There is the possibility, too, that the familiar rhetorical formulas, suited to corresponding verse patterns, may play a small part in retaining the structures which embody them.

The influence of the music must also be remembered. As we have observed several times, text forms everywhere show a practical domination over their accompaniments, but there is also necessarily a certain amount of mutual interaction and influence. In the folk-song, text and tune are fitted to each other -- a reciprocal adjustment in many respects -- and no important alteration can take place in either without encountering and overcoming the passive resistance inherent in the set form of the other.

Compared with the stanza pattern, the melody of a ballad in circulation is much less stable, though this general assertion must be understood in the light of important qualifications. There are two structural aspects of melody primarily important to its identity: metrical pattern and tonal pattern, the latter being synonymous with what we sometimes call melodic curve.

at hand for comparing these two elements is not as extensive as the figures above would suggest. At the other end of the scale are such ballads as The Cherry Tree Carol, and The Baffled Knight, well known, of course, but comparatively scarce in published form. The latter ballad registers lowest of the whole group, with only 13 variants, 10 of them supplied with music. In the case of most (but not all) of these ballads, the majority of variants are American, but this fact, I believe, is irrelevant to what I have to say except in certain instances where I expressly take it into account.

Between the two is a sharp contrast in traditional stability. By metrical pattern I refer here in a general and rough way (for the purpose of drawing a distinction) to the number of phrases in the tune, their relative duration, their division into measures, and the distribution of words within the measures -- in short, to things measurable in terms of time, not pitch. In its metrical pattern, as here described, the tune must always correspond to the verse figures of the stanza, and consequently must be affected by stanzaic conservatism to some degree.

But the case is far otherwise with the melodic curve, or tonal pattern. Here rapid and continuous change is the rule. Identical tunes are rare; even the closest variants usually exhibit differences. Melodies classified in this way tend to group themselves into local families; i. e. tunes collected in the same region are almost always closely affiliated, though startling exceptions are ever likely to crop up.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps an instance or two will make the general character of these family organizations clearer. Among the recorded variants of Barbara Allen can be found a large family of related tunes stretching, in a geographical sense, from North Carolina to Texas. Another distinct family is to be found among the Scottish versions. A variety of other tunes, totally unrelated for the most part, have been gathered from New England, England, Scotland, and many other localities and regions. Lord Randal shows well-defined families in the South (with North Carolina as a nucleus), and in Maine. Variants from elsewhere are diversified. The Golden Vanity exhibits a well connected English family, while its American variants show only rather feeble relationships here and there. These instances, which there is no need for multiplying, show in a rough way how widely diversified the melodies generally are, and how restricted their affiliations when these are found.

For reasons not clear to me, the variant tunes of relatively scarce ballads (like Bruton Town, The Cherry Tree Carol, Early Early in the Spring) appear, judging from our recorded specimens, to be much more variegated and diversified than are the melodies in wider circulation (such as Lord Randal, Barbara Allen, Lord Lovel, etc.). Barry, who has observed the same curious circumstance, comments tentatively as follows:

"As to the relative rate of change to be observed in text and melody, when each is dealt with for purposes of comparison as a separate entity, there is apparently some slight evidence to show that, in the case of a ballad which is widely known and sung, the text is apt to show a greater rate of variation than the melody. On the other hand, in the case of a ballad which has had no such wide currency, the melodic changes may be more noticeable than the changes in the text."<sup>11</sup>

An instance of such a remarkable exception occurs among the variants of Barbara Allen. Here we find two closely affiliated tunes, not belonging to any of the larger families, turning up in such widely separated localities as Oregon and Scotland. See Kidson, p. 37, and Sandburg, The American Songbag, p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>

Int. p. xxxii.

While the principle mentioned appears to hold in regard to melody, I have not succeeded in finding any clearly defined tendency among texts toward an inverse process. I am rather afraid, too, that a comparison, such as I have made, of unequal numbers of variants may be deceptive in its apparent indications. Worse yet, we have no way of discovering how widely a ballad was circulated before the days of collecting. My opinions are more uncertain than Barry's.<sup>12</sup>

Tunes, we may summarize, do not generally survive long distances. We find locally related groups, but no truly national tunes. Very few melodies are recorded in this country which have also been recorded in England or Scotland. As mentioned above, one sometimes can be found; and in cases like that of Lord Level, a paragon of traditional preservation, a few tunes show an astonishing distribution--for this ballad I have closely affiliated tunes from Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maine, and Scotland. But, as a rule, melodies do not circulate in recognizable shape outside of the local districts where they are common.

It seems reasonable to suppose, furthermore, that what is true of the melodies in respect to geographical distance may also be true of distance in the dimension of time. That melodies preserve their integrity through more than a few human generations seems doubtful. What we may rightly call musical conservatism operates strongly in the use of scales, modes, and other phases of traditional technique, but the melodies, the products of technique, must, on the analogy of the variants, always in oral circulation change quickly and continuously into ever new tonal patterns.

Just how rapidly and by what (if any) discernible stages melodies change their tonal patterns in circulation is an interesting problem, but hard to approach, since traditional provenience is so extremely difficult to establish. I have made no progress with this branch of inquiry, but the details of the following trio of tunes may, perhaps, furnish us with some inkling of what the evolutionary process must be like. For convenience I have marked the differences which have developed among these closely related melodies. Changes of this sort evidently go on and on until the whole character of the tone-pattern has

12

Mention should be made here that a number of other problems concerned with various relationships of text and tune have been excluded from discussion in these pages. These problems are principally of two sorts, those already successfully answered by previous students of the subject, and those which seem at present not qualified for solution at all. An example of the first is the central question of why texts of a given ballad have different tunes. (See The Ballad of Tradition, p. 73 ff.) An example of the second is the baffling problem of precisely how ballads interact upon each other in the course of their traditional history. (See British Ballads from Maine, Int. p. xxxii.)

A word should be interpolated here, also, about one important element of stanza pattern which so far has not been accorded mention -- the rhyme scheme. Since this varies considerably among different stanza types, it has seemed expedient to pass it by as a generic matter, and to connect its criticism with that of the particular stanza types in which it variously occurs, later to be analyzed.

been completely transformed.

Lord Level

Davis, Nos. 20B, 20E, 20L, in order, pp. 573-574.

Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



The causes of the ready variability of melodic curve, which we have been observing, are evidently not far to seek. Melodic curve has relatively little to do with verse pattern, and still less with the ideational nucleus of the text. Consequently it is little affected by the inherent stability of the latter or the conservative tendency of the former. There is little reason for its remaining stable, in other words. Of course there is a real tendency among singers to remember and transmit the tunes they hear, but this tendency is enfeebled by the powerful forces ranged in opposition against it. Singers, we know, introduce variations of which they are unaware, and the accumulated effects of such changes very quickly become radically important in the evolutionary sense. The limits within which melody may change its form and still remain itself are not wide. In view of such a complexion of circumstances, the relatively rapid change in tonal pattern, as compared with stanza form, is readily understandable in the history of folk-song.

This completes the account of the stanza as we shall approach it from the generic point of view. Our next concern is the criticism of the various individual types of ballad stanza belonging to the tradition.

## Chapter Four COMMON METER

By far the most common stanza form in all collections, either of texts or folk-songs, is the familiar "ballad stanza," which has gone over into literary tradition under the same name. The criticism of this stanza is not, at any point, easy, and the first problem to emerge is that of a practicable name, the usual name being unfitted for use here because of its ambiguity. Other names which, at various times and for different reasons, have been applied to the pattern include septenarius, septenary, fourteener, and Common Meter. Each of these carries historical associations of one sort or another which are slightly objectionable to our purpose; yet it will be better to choose one of these terms than to inaugurate a new one to swell the ranks. Because of its place in a system of terminology which we shall find it convenient to employ throughout the discussion, the term Common Meter (from the hymn books) seems to be preferable. There will be no harm and much gain if we frequently refer to this name by its conventionalized initials CM.

Common Meter is a metrical pattern well known since medieval times (though by various names) in English balladry, hymnology, literary lyric, and narrative poetry. The origin of its distinctive metrical scheme has not yet been conclusively demonstrated. That is a problem which does not concern us here except as a reminder that the precise formal analogy between CM and its melody in folk-song indicates that, somehow or other, the two must have developed together. Our first concern with CM is to determine, if possible beyond risk of doubt or ambiguity, what its metrical and rhythmic structure fundamentally is, and this, for the time being, without regard to how its verses happen to be arranged when set down on paper. A close scrutiny of the pattern discloses some phenomena which are sure to escape a casual inspection.

The following stanza from Barbara Allen is a good stock example of CM in its usual verse formulation. (Child, No. 84B.)

(4)	And	as		she	was		walking		on	a		day,
(3)	She		heard	the		bell	a-		ringing,			
(4)	And		it	did		seem	to		ring	to		her
(3)	'Un-		worthy		Barbara		Allen. <sup>1</sup>					

A more ancient example is the following from St. Stephen and Herod (Child 22). I am setting it down in couplet form, as Child prints it following a manuscript which was probably written (see Child's headnote) in the time of King Henry VI.

(7)		Steuyne		out	of		kechone		cam,		wyth		borte		hed	on		honde;
(7)	He		saw	a		sterre	was		fayr	and		bryzt,		ouer		Bedlem		stonde.

It will be noticed that there is no essential metrical difference between the raw materials out of which each one of the above stanzas is built up. This fact can be shown more clearly

<sup>1</sup>  
Cf. Chapter II for explanation of symbols and terminology used in this discussion.

by setting down the first example in the couplet form, as follows.

- (7) And as | she was | walking | on a | day, She | heard the | bell a- | ringing,  
 (7) And | it did | seem to | ring to | her 'Un- | worthy | Barbara | Allen.'

Either stanza, no matter how arranged, always contains a total of 14 heard rhythmic stresses, each with its corresponding measure, and this fact can be used as a definition of CM, since it is true of no other stanza form. It becomes clear from these illustrations that any CM stanza can arbitrarily be arranged into either a couplet of long lines, or into a quatrain of short lines. Using arithmetical figures to represent the number of heard stresses in each verse, the long line couplet is designated by the formula 7.7. Likewise the short line quatrain can be indicated by the corresponding formula 4.3.4.3. (To represent the facts just observed repeated use will be made of the technical terms long line and short line.<sup>2</sup> It should be noticed that the long line always contains seven heard stresses, whereas the short line may contain either three or four.)

Theoretically CM can be divided into still other schemes of versification, but historical practice, for reasons later to be investigated, has always restricted itself to the couplet and quatrain patterns. During the past several centuries, or since the collecting of ballad texts first became a literary interest, the quatrain has been almost universally employed as the CM verse pattern, not only by literary editors but by writers of manuscripts and publishers of broadsides.<sup>3</sup> Some earlier manuscripts, however, show the couplet arrangement, which can be seen in Child's specimens Nos. 22 and 23. Without the music, it is impossible to hazard a guess as to whether the couplet versification was occasioned by melodic setting, by poetic convention, or merely by individual preference.

Some less apparent facts of CM must now be observed. Of great importance in this stanza, no matter how versified, is the syllabic continuity (absence of metrical rests between syllables) of the long lines, and the rests which always follow them. The stanza used above will again serve for illustration.

- I. (4)      And as | she was | walking | on a | day,      1      2      3      4  
 II. (3)      She | heard the | bell a- | ringing. | x  
 III. (4)      And | it did | seem to | ring to | her  
 IV. (3)      'Un- | worthy | Barbara | Allen.' | x y

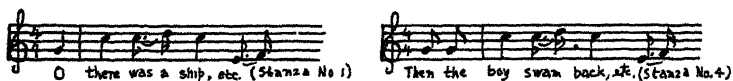
<sup>2</sup>

I am following terminology used by Professor Groll. Cf. The Rhythm of English Verse, p. 29.

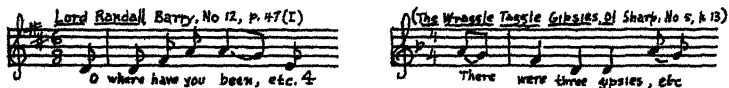
<sup>3</sup>

For a historical picture of this convention, the following important collections (among others) may be consulted. Date of first publication is given in each instance. The range and sequence of dates should be noticed.

The first two syllables of verse I (and as) are here, as in music, treated as being extra-metrical, since they form no part of any complete measure in the stanza. This phenomenon has been given the formidable name anacrusis, and hailed by some critics as an unpardonable attempt at scholarly mystification. In point of fact, anacrusis is a very simple and natural thing, a familiar feature both in poetry and music, especially melodic music. It appears to have the effect of preparing the ear for the first onset of the regular rhythm. It is normal to all ballad, and other folk-song, stanzas, which cannot, in fact, often be found without such preliminary syllables. The probable explanation of this lies in the normality of anacrusis in ballad music, though there seems to be no logical method of proving such a supposition. The anacrusis of the stanza, at any rate, always has its counterpart in the melody, of necessity. It usually consists of but one syllable, though sometimes of several, and this variety is frequently observable among the different stanzas of the same ballad. The opening measures of the first and fourth stanzas of Sharp's The Golden Vanity may be compared (No. 14, p. 36. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)



As in the examples above, the anacrusis note is generally lower in pitch than the opening note of the first measure. This is a natural musical peculiarity. The syllable is introductory to the initial stress, and its tonal subjugency helps to declare its subordination to the important note whose advent its purpose is to announce. But exceptions are frequent. The two following figures respectively show anacrusis on an equal and on a superior level of pitch, relative to the note beginning the measure proper. (Courtesy Yale Univ. Press and Oliver Ditson Co.)



But it is high time to return to the stanza from Barbara Allen whose structure we had begun to dissect. The first verse, as we have seen, involves anacrusis, or we may say, is anacrusis. In looking at the stanza it would seem at first sight that verses II, III, and IV are similarly so. But such is not truly

Rollins, A Pepysian Garland (contents belong to period 1640-1700); Ramsay, Tea Table Miscellany (1724); Percy, Reliques (1765); Herd, Ancient and Modern Scottish Songs (1776); Ritson, A Select Collection of English Songs (1783); Scott, Minstrelsy (1802-3); Motherwell, Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern (1827); Child, English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882-1898).

4

"O" as an anacrusis syllable is common in occurrence. It seems to be a device for supplying the musical anacrusis (or "catch-note") with a syllable in cases where one is not found, or cannot easily be arranged, in the purely narrative language of the stanza proper.

the case; and here we come upon an important analytical fact. The beginning syllable (she) of verse II follows without a rest the concluding syllable (day) of verse I, and in fact combines with it to form one proper  $3/8$  measure, which is, of course, the metrical unit of the stanza. Exactly the same thing can be said of the junction of verses III and IV. On the other hand, a metrical  $1/4$  rest separates verse II from verse III, effectively breaking their syllabic continuity. And the same fact is true of verse IV in relation to the beginning line of any following stanza. In short, verses I and II metrically combine to form a continuous line of seven syllabic  $3/8$  measures; and verses III and IV combine in precisely the same way. These facts might be illustrated by a slightly different fashion of setting down the stanza.

I.	And	as		she	was		walking		on	a		day,	She	5
II.				heard	the		bell	a-	ringing;	And				
III.				it	did		seem	to	ring	to		her	'Un-	
IV.				worthy	Barbara		Allen.'							

The above mode of notation will provide, I think, a clear graphic distinction between the anacrusis in the first verse and the regular measures which make up every following verse in the stanza. The syllable And in measure 4, verse II, can here be seen as part of a normal measure, though it be preceded in its own measure by a quarter-rest. And it might be said that even the initial anacrusis of the stanza would not exist as such in relation to a preceding stanza if both were read continuously as though metrically connected.

The rests in verses II and IV, which we have been noticing from time to time, are of the greatest importance to the rhythm of the stanza, but have so far been almost totally disregarded by the world at large in the criticism of ballad structure. Probably because these rests do not contain syllables, they are almost never seen to be integral parts of verses. Yet any conceivable reading of CM will show instantly that they are such. Each long line, it is true, contains only seven heard stresses, but the entire long line, as read, occupies nevertheless the time of eight full measures. It would be, in fact, proper and legitimate to conceive of the long line as containing a total of eight stresses, the eighth stress, however, falling on a metrical rest.<sup>6</sup> The scansion above will show graphically the validity of such a conception.

Bearing these facts in mind, it becomes clear that CM cannot

<sup>5</sup>  
I am deliberately disregarding the syncopation in this verse as a refinement unnecessary to the elucidation of the point at issue.

<sup>6</sup>  
Cf. Professor Groll's scansions and comments in The Rhythm of English Verse, p. 29 ff.



adequately be represented by the following formula which is frequently, if not usually, seen in published form as a rhythmic picture of the stanza.

As couplet:  $\begin{array}{l} \text{I.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{II.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \end{array}$

As quatrain:  $\begin{array}{l} \text{I.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{II.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{III.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{IV.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \end{array}$

Schemes of this sort give recognition only to the part of the stanza actually spoken, and disregard the timing of the verses as if this were an unessential matter in the reading. If, as the above notation seems to indicate, verse II in the couplet follows the seventh stress of verse I without a pause, the rhythmic structure is ruined, and with it all that it contributes to the poetic beauty of the form. If such figurative approximations are to be used to represent CM, something like the following formula would need to be worked out.

As couplet:  $\begin{array}{l} \text{I.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{II.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \end{array} \parallel \begin{array}{l} \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \end{array} \left( \begin{array}{l} \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \cup \quad \text{—} \end{array} \right)$

As quatrain:  $\begin{array}{l} \text{I.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{II.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad (\cup \quad \text{—}) \\ \text{III.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \\ \text{IV.} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad (\cup \quad \text{—}) \end{array} \text{?}$

The structural facts just observed are, as I have said, of great importance in the rhythm of the stanza. It is these mid-point and terminal rests which, conjoined with the syllabic content of the long lines, divide the stanza metrically into a symmetrical whole, and impart to it the rhythmic balance and grace that we are accustomed to hear in its poetic movement.

As would be expected, the features characteristic of CM have their formal counterparts in the melodies to which the stanzas are set. The rests at the ends of the second and fourth short lines are accommodated in the melody ordinarily by the prolonged notes referred to in an earlier chapter as the cadential pause. Sometimes there is also a short rest in the music, as well. This has previously been illustrated (cf. p. 6) but since

7

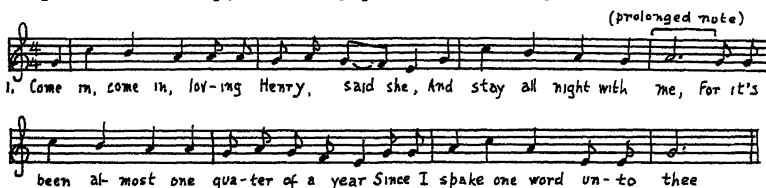
Symbols of this kind as used in present-day pedagogy are often spoken of in a hazy fashion as "longs" and "shorts." No effort is usually made to clarify the resulting confusion in a student's mind as to the relationship between stress and quantity in English verse. Symbols really denoting "longs" and "shorts" can be used with a modicum of success in scanning English verse which has deliberately been made according to definite quantitative patterns, in imitation of ancient classical feet, or for some other reason. But as applied to ballad verse, or to native English verse of any sort, the terms as ordinarily employed are practically without meaning.

we are now interested in these correspondences from the poetic point of view, a fresh example will not be out of place. The two following are typical.

### Young Hunting

Campbell and Sharp, No. 15F, p. 53. Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons

(prolonged note)

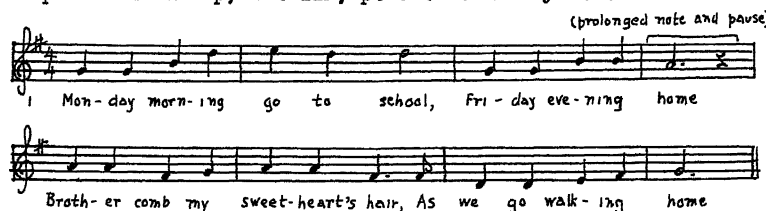


1. Come in, come in, lov-ing Hen-ry, said she, And stay all night with me, for it's  
been al-most one qua-ter of a year Since I spake one word un-to thee

### The Two Brothers

Campbell and Sharp, No. 11A, p. 33. Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons

(prolonged note and pause)



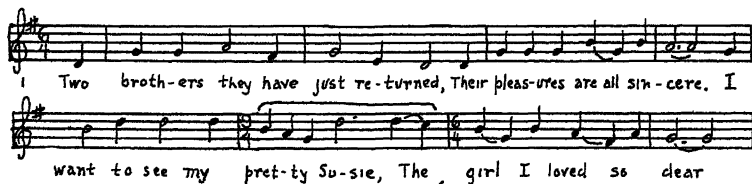
1 Mon-day morn-ing go to school, Fri-day eve-ning home  
Broth-er comb my sweet-heart's hair, As we go walk-ing home

When musical rests occur inside a melody, as they do in the second example, it generally means that the total number of syllables per line is at a low average. The first long line of this stanza, for instance, contains 12 syllables as opposed to 16 in the first long line of the example printed above it. Syllabic content within the measure and the verse, as we noticed in the preceding chapter, is an unstable matter among the texts.

The above examples are, indeed, typical. But sometimes extended pauses occur at the ends of other phrases in the melody where they would not be expected and where no apparent sanction for their existence can be found in the text. Such a tune is the following.

### The Two Brothers

Campbell and Sharp, No. 11B, p. 34. Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons



1 Two broth-ers they have just re-turned, Their pleas-ures are all sin-cere. I  
want to see my pret-ty Su-sie, The girl I loved so dear

Such irregularities in timing grow out of conventional styles of singing, and perhaps, in some cases, from the singer's

sense of a pause after a phrasal division of text -- the latter explanation must account, I believe, for the peculiar rendition of Early, Early in the Spring, shown on p.52. Noteworthy in this connection, too, is Sharp's remark:<sup>8</sup>

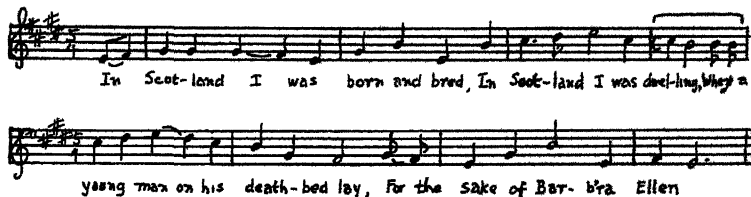
"They [the Southern mountaineers] have one vocal peculiarity ...which I have never noticed amongst English folk-singers, namely, the habit of dwelling arbitrarily upon certain notes of the melody, generally the weaker accents. This practice, which is almost universal, by disguising the rhythm and breaking up the monotonous regularity of the phrases, produces an effect of improvisation and freedom from rule which is very pleasing. The effect is most characteristic in 6/8 tunes, as, for example, No. 16G, in which in the course of the tune pauses are made on each of the three notes of the subsidiary triplets." I append the illustration referred to.

Lord Thomas and Fair Ellinor  
Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons



Sometimes, too, singers, impatient to be on with their song, cut short the prolonged notes belonging to the medial cadence, as some English peasant has done in this case:

Barbara Ellen  
Sharp, No. 7, p. 20. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



The singer has clipped a quarter value from his proper dotted half-note at the end of the first long line, thus changing the time of that measure from the normal 5/4 into 4/4. Such impatience seems to be a virtually universal psychological trait among unschooled singers, a fact most understandable to any one who has ever attempted to accompany the singing congregation of a country church. The trait is a prolific source of irregular time in ballad music, but the odd musical measures thus produced have, as far as I have been able to observe, no

reactionary effect whatsoever upon the form of the verses which they accompany. The whole phenomenon, in fact, is more in its nature like a shift of tempo than like a rigid mechanical change of time, though it is definite enough in repetition to justify the use of a special time signature to mark it.

In the face of numerous irregularities it cannot be said that CM is associated with any very definite melodic formula. Nevertheless, some fundamental generalizations can be made. The stanza is almost always set to simple quadriphrasal melody, and, where exceptions occur, to the compound biphrasal form, which is almost its twin. In either case, important cadential pauses occur at mid-point and conclusion of the tune, corresponding to the two alternating three-stress verses of the text, and if the syllabic content of the verse is low, rests are likely to occur as well at these points. These medial and terminal features of meter are chiefly what mark the tunes set to CM apart from the tunes set to other stanzas containing the same number of measures; but we shall postpone close inspection of the difference until the point reappears in connection with the music of the Long Meter stanza. CM, mated with its characteristic tune, is by far the most familiar and established formal organization in balladry, a fact tacitly recognized by critics in the nomenclature employed to denote the type: "ballad type" by Barry in reference to the tune, "ballad stanza" by the world at large in reference to the text.

I have used the term CM so far to describe a structural pattern, and have paid no attention to the different forms of verse which traditionally have been used in the concrete stanza. The examples cited have all been made up of purely narrative verses, and they are the normal sort. We may call them narrative stanzas to distinguish them from others of the same metrical pattern involving elements of refrain. I shall illustrate the latter here to round out our present account, but shall reserve comment until the pattern comes up for analysis in the chapter devoted to refrains.

This not uncommon form is made up of narrative and refrain lines which alternate, the four-stress short lines (Nos. 1 and 3) being narrative, the three-stress short lines (Nos. 2 and 4) being refrains. (Child 18A)

Sir Egrabell had sonnes three,  
Blow thy horne, good hunter  
 Sir Lyonell was one of these  
As I am a gentle hunter.

Such a stanza may be called CM with alternating refrain to distinguish it both from the narrative stanza and from the stanza forms which are followed by burdens or end refrains.

One final and important observation must be made upon the material just reviewed. In CM the syllabic continuity of the long lines, the rests at the ends of them, and the usual metrical (not melodic) pattern of accompanying tunes would, added together, appear to form a strong argument in favor of conceiving and

reading CM as a couplet pattern, consisting of two long lines (7.7.) with the corollary of adopting that typographical form as the most suitable mode of representing the stanza as a unit of text, apart from its music. If the above set of facts were all we had to consider, such a conclusion would be inescapable. But, as will presently be seen, there are other weighty matters which combine to make such a theory open to question. To the various and somewhat complicated ratiocinations developing out of these considerations we shall next turn attention.

Chapter Five  
RATIONALIZING COMMON METER

There has been, and there still is, some difference of opinion among critics of the ballad as to how the verses of CM should be conceived and arranged. The question of the "real form" of the CM stanza in theory is not easy to answer, and in this dissertation amounts to something like a crux. Its troublesome ramifications may be traced to several causes. The most obvious one is the anonymity of ballad authorship. Texts are not written over an author's name, nor can manuscripts be collated with a view toward fixing an authentic version. All versions are, of course, equally authentic. We merely know that the texts have come to be what we find them by virtue of the accumulated changes made in them by many traditional singers. Moreover, the ballads have remained songs as long as they have continued in tradition. The collector or editor, that is, who takes the text of a ballad as he hears it sung, notes it down as a form of poetry and prints it for the first time as a poem is obliged to assume responsibility for all the facts of its versification. There has been, and can be, no question of faithfulness to a poetic original when there is no original.

Uncertainty as to verse division is also engendered by the curious and peculiar structural ambiguity of the long line of CM, containing as it does the odd number of seven heard stresses, with a cesura ordinarily between the fourth and fifth. In some ways this line looks like a continuous element; in other ways it appears to be broken and divided into segments. And the analyst can take little comfort from the fact that the same ambiguity inheres in the melodic accompaniments belonging to the same long lines. The whole problem is rendered still more debatable by the lack of any absolute or authoritative standard of reference. For instance, why and how far should we accept the guidance and authority of the musical structure in determining the formulation of CM verses? Or how much deference should be paid, instead, to the independent demands of the text as a poetic creation?

Questions of this kind obviously cannot be answered altogether by logic or by rule of thumb. I believe that the central problem, however, is not so intangible as to preclude an approach to a satisfactory and definite solution.

DISTINCTIONS

To begin with, three practical conceptions of CM are possible in relation to the problem. The stanza can be conceived as a quatrain (4.3.4.3.), or as a couplet (7.7.), or one may hold that the distinction between these alternative arrangements is merely academic -- that it can make no real poetic difference which form might be used.

As to the latter view, in spite of its facile attractiveness as glimpsed from the mazes of a labyrinth, I find myself unable to support it, and shall attempt briefly to show why, though my explanation must perforce be advanced on the treacherous ground of rhythmic and poetic feeling. It may be true that to some readers no poetic difference obtains between a quatrain and a

couplet. I have found in practice, however, that to most readers sensitive to rhythmic effects the difference -- though of course it is slight -- is both real and important. The reader may be enabled, perhaps, to form an opinion of his own through a comparison of the two following arrangements of the same stanza from Child's Sir Patrick Spens (58A). It should be remembered that any differences of rhythmic effect here observable would be multiplied or increased if two whole ballads were thus compared, so that the reader could get completely into the rhythmic feeling of the one before turning to the other.

(1)

The king sits in Dumferling toune, drinking the blude-reid wine:  
'O whar will I get guid sailor to sail this schip of mine?'

(2)

The king sits in Dumferling toune,  
Drinking the blude-reid wine:  
'O whar will I get guid sailor,  
To sail this schip of mine?'

I propose that the two stanzas above are not identical in rhythmic effect, though of course they both belong to the same fundamental metrical pattern. The natural cesuras at the ends of the short lines are more accentuated by the quatrain. Conversely, the couplet produces a more unbroken effect of continuity and possesses a broader sweep, just as, in music, 6/8 time differs in the actual playing and hearing from 3/4 time, though the same material can be represented either way. I daresay the experienced reader must feel that the total result in the blending and expression of thought and rhythm is not quite the same in couplet and quatrain; that these forms, in other words, are separable on grounds of poetic effect alone.

Now, we have already seen in the metrical pattern of 'text and tune (cf. pp. 57-58) a potent argument in favor of the couplet conception of CM. There is no need to review those facts again: clearly they exist, and they throw their weight very definitely on the side mentioned. As an argument, however, they appear to stand alone. It might be urged that the rhymes at the ends of the long lines tend to mark them off as natural units, but this argument is weak in that real poetic usage allows no reason for supposing couplet rhymes to be superior or preferable to rhymes in alternating lines. Against the couplet conception, on the other hand, is the long historical tradition of the quatrain, with all that it implies, and to this matter we must now turn attention.

#### THE QUATRAIN TRADITION

First of all, here is the fact that all the collectors and editors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as our contemporary field workers in folk-song, have arranged, or are arranging CM as a quatrain pattern. This fact alone and by itself is of some significance. A habit of critical selection so widely prevalent and so long continued has not resulted from mere accident or caprice. The long list of ballad editors in-

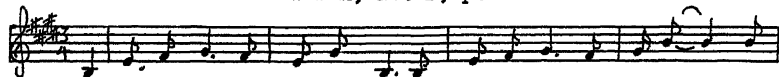
cludes some men of sound scholarly judgment and catholic taste. Scott, Herd, Ritson, Motherwell, et. al. (not to mention Sharp and Barry) were not merely blind followers in their predecessors' footsteps -- some of them have left us vehement proof to the contrary. But if the editors have been, after all, simply following a convention or custom, we still have to account for the custom. It had to begin somewhere. Why were the beginners of the custom disposed and inclined to put their CM texts in the quatrain form? They have nowhere told us, but it is a safe assumption that they were following some sort of guide. The recorders and editors of balladry, first and last, collectively constitute something of an authoritarian body whose representative critical consensus cannot be wholly disregarded.

#### MELODIC ANALOGY

More important than what the collectors and editors have done, however, is the reason why they have done it, and why they still continue to do it. This reason, to my own way of thinking, is not hard to find. The recorders of texts, early and late, have evidently been guided by the melodic divisions, or phrases, of their songs. We must remember that all of our genuine published texts have ultimately been derived from a singing voice. Some one at some time, in other words, has taken each text that we have from a song, and has done it by aural processes. Experience clearly shows that, whenever verbal texts are abstracted from songs perceived by the ear, there is a strong natural tendency on the transposer's part to follow, in his text verses, the melodic arrangement in the song he has heard. A melody is understood and remembered musically in terms of its various phrases, and the psychological importance of this fact must not be underestimated. The melodic divisions of a tune make a far more distinct impression upon the hearer's mind than do the metrical aspects of the cadences. The latter, we have already concluded, favor, on metrical ground (cf. pp. 67-68) the couplet pattern. But it is melody which the hearer experiences, not meter, and if metrical considerations enter into the equation at all in the hearing of a song, they do so naturally as contributory parts of melodic shape. The fact that CM is normally accompanied by simple quadriphrasal melody accounts adequately, I think, for the custom which has grown up of dividing its stanza into a corresponding scheme of verses. Let us notice in this connection some random models of the CM pattern.

#### Barbara Allen

Kidson, No. B, p. 38

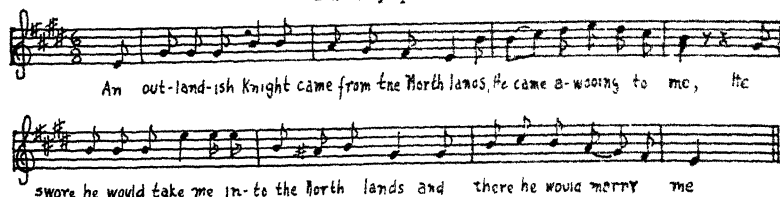


In Scot-land I was born and bred, Oh there it was my dwelling I  
 courted there a pretty maid, Oh her name was Bar-bara Allen



The Outlandish Knight

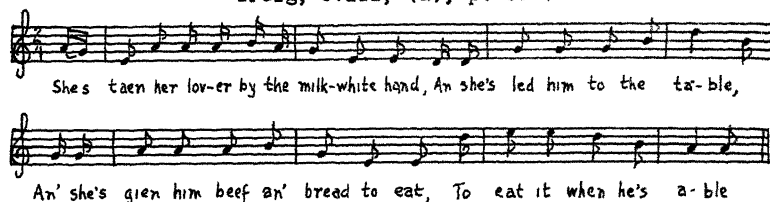
Burne, p. 548.



An out-land-ish Knight came from the North lands, He came a-wooing to me, He  
swore he would take me in-to the North lands and there he would marry me

Trooper and Maid

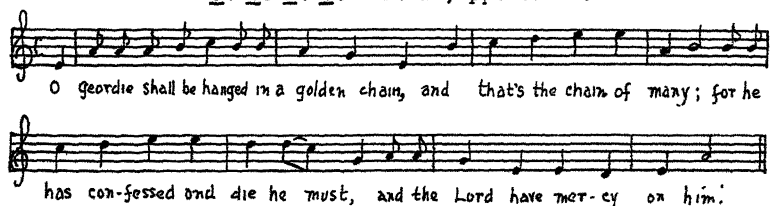
Greig, CVIII, (a), p. 247.



Shes taen her lov-er by the milk-white hand, An she's led him to the ta-ble,  
An' she's gien him beef an' bread to eat, To eat it when he's a-ble

Geordie

J. F. S. S. Vol. II, pp. 27-28.



O Geordie shall be hanged in a golden chain, and that's the chain of many; for he  
has con-fessed and die he must, and the Lord have mer-cy on him.

These are typical melodic specimens. It is, I am sure, impossible to be familiar with them and not realize at the same time how forcibly their phrasing imposes on the mind the imprint of a quadruple division. The relatively long metrical pause usually found at the medial point does not by any means offset the impression. The four musical cadences which mark the termination of the four musical phrases leave the strongest stamp of form upon mind and memory. This fact, alone and in its historical setting, forms a strong argument in favor of the quatrain conception of CM, if we are to admit the authority of the music as a regulative principle.

## MUSIC AS GUIDE

That the music should be allowed such authority seems to be the general opinion among critics and collectors nowadays. If the reader will glance through any of the folk-song collections made within recent times by C.J. Sharp or by any of his successors in the field, he will find there that the collector has based his versification upon the musical phrasing of his tunes. In fact, that is the usual fashion in which songs of any kind

are printed, whether the texts appear along with the musical staff, or in separate stanzas below it. Ordinarily the object of such parallel phrasing is to enable the reader, who is also presumably the singer, to fit together easily and correctly the corresponding parts of his text and tune. But, from a poetic viewpoint, there is another purpose which is also served by this procedure.

I suppose every lover of folk-poetry would unhesitatingly agree that what we might call the translation of ballad-song into ballad-poetry ought to be accomplished, so far as possible, in accordance with strictly conservative principles. It would be agreed, I think, that the poetic text ought to preserve, as far as it can be made to do so, the original shape and character which it had as a traditional product, or, in other words, as a folk-song. No matter what is done or can be done, the text, when separated from its melody, is sure to lose a great deal of its original and congenital complexion and distinctiveness -- that departs with the music. But the transposer of the text -- he who assumes responsibility for the reconstruction of the poem -- ought to feel obligated in principle to save and retain as much of this distinctive quality as he is able. Perhaps I am not wrong in supposing that such an ideal achievement can best be realized by a faithful representation in every ballad text of all of the formal features in the musical setting which can successfully be carried across into poetry. As an extreme example of what this would sometimes lead to, we might notice the opening stanza of Sharp's Lord Rendal (No. 18, p. 44. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.). Here is a rare and beautiful melodic pattern.

Where have you been all the day, Rendal my son? Where have you been all the day, my pretty one? I've  
been to my sweet-heart, Mother. I've been to my sweet-heart, Mother -  
Make my bed soon, for I'm sick to my heart and I fain would lie down

There is no doubt that many a text collector of the past would have, without compunction, set down the stanza in the following way:

Where have you been all the day, Rendal my son?  
Where have you been all the day, my pretty one?  
I've been to my sweetheart, Mother, make my bed soon,  
For I'm sick to my heart and I fain would lie down.

The individual rhythmic quality of the stanza is, however, obliterated by such a phrasal distortion of the original. And

I think it is much better preserved by the following versification, shaped faithfully on the analogy of the musical phrases.

|Where have you been|all the day,|Rendal my|son?  
 |Where have you been|all the day,|my pretty|one?  
 I've|been to my|sweetheart,|Mother;  
 I've|been to my|sweetheart,|Mother,  
 |Make my bed|soon,  
 For I'm|sick to my|heart,  
 And I|fain would lie|down.<sup>1</sup>

It may be objected that the stanza which I have just recommended is inferior, purely as a poetic achievement, to the one condemned. If this be true (and it is fair to suppose that in some cases, at least, it would be) the proper reply is that accurate and truthful representation is of greater importance than editorial improvement in the transcription of folk-song. No small number of beautiful traditional texts and tunes have been irrecoverably lost through the tardy recognition among collectors and editors of the value of that principle.

Implicit in the theory just recommended, of course, is its application to our CM texts. When the four simple phrases of their tunes are clear and distinct, they should, I believe, be conceived and portrayed as quatrains. This would ordinarily be the case. When the melodies are biphrasal, as sometimes happens, then the stanzas would be more accurately preserved as couplets. In accordance with this principle each of the four stanzas printed above in this discussion should be reckoned quatrains. Stanzas set to tunes like those on page 14 should correspondingly be considered couplets. When phrasal configuration happens to be uncertain or debatable, the musical taste of the transcriber must be the determining factor.

#### POETRY AS GUIDE

It is plain that general usage and intrinsic merit are both in favor of musical structure as a criterion of versification. But in dealing with CM we have so far left out of account whatever indices to arrangement might be found in the poetry itself -- except to observe that the couplet and quatrain are not interchangeable in terms of poetic effect. The poetry as such, however, cannot be altogether overlooked. For after all, a poem is not a song, but a form of metrical language with claims to formal arrangement based on its own laws. We tacitly acknowledge some of these claims when we abandon the melodic curve and syllabic time-pattern of the folk-song and follow, in the spoken text, the necessary conventions of spoken language. But it is fair to inquire whether the process may not or should not be carried still further. What about the versification as well? Is any definite verse pattern indicated by the structure of the language out of which the stanza is built? If so, does it co-

1

As a matter of practical typography, the repetitious elements could, of course, be eliminated in stanzas following the first.

incide with the conception we have already reached in connection with the music?

All of these questions, it appears, can be answered positively. Indeed we should hardly, in the nature of things, expect the rhythmic pattern of verses suggested by the language to be contradictory to that presupposed by the music, in view of their formal union in the folk-song from which both have been derived. Our analysis has shown that the long line contains seven continuous syllabic measures, followed by a rest; and this metrical scheme, in itself, tends strongly to mark off the long line as the natural verse unit in the stanza. But other elements in the language are opposed to such a division and militate to mark off the short lines as the proper component entities.

I have just opened the Cambridge edition of Child to find a purely random example of a CM stanza. The first stanza which met my notice was the ninth in version D of Child Maurice, No. 83.

God mak you safe, you ladies all,  
 God mak you safe and sure;  
 But Burnard's lady amang you all,  
 My errand is to her.

Suppose now we write out this stanza in the form of ordinary prose:

God mak you safe, you ladies all, God mak you safe and sure;  
 but Burnard's lady amang you all, my errand is to her.

The object of the prose transcription is to discover whether any non-metrical reasons exist for a division of this sentence into component parts. It is clear that such reasons do exist. The meaning of the clauses and phrases, and the necessity for corresponding syntactical breaks, produce points of division not only between the long lines, but between the short lines also, and, in one case, twice in the short line. In CM generally, syntactical breaks occur characteristically at the termination of the short lines. Let us observe them in several other stanzas. (The following three examples are all first stanzas and all from Child: Mary Hamilton, No. 173A, Young Johnstone, No. 88A, and Geordie, No. 209A.)

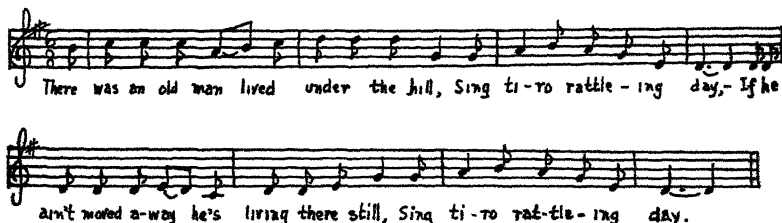
- (1) Word 's gane to the kitchen,  
 And word 's gane to the ha,  
 That Marie Hamilton gangs wi bairn  
 To the highest Stewart of a'.
- (2) The knight stands in the stable-door,  
 As he was for to ryde,  
 When out then came his fair lady,  
 Desiring him to byde.
- (3) There was a battle in the north,  
 And nobles there was many,  
 And they hae killd Sir Charlie Hay,  
 And they laid the wyte on Geordie.

These breaks, natural to the structure of the language, are cesural in nature and effect. They are, it is true, not accompanied by rests in the form of omitted syllables. But they can and do have real meaning as points of division in spite of that. Their reality is recognized in actual reading by voice inflection, or perhaps also, in some cases, by very slight pauses which do not interrupt the steady onward movement of the rhythm. This is a matter not suited for written illustration, but the reader may put it to the test quite easily by reading aloud any ballad text in CM and noticing carefully what he does with his voice at the ends of the short lines. He will conclude at the end of such a test, I am sure, that the meaning in the short lines, and their corresponding syntax, mark them off from each other as a usual thing.

The conception of the short line as the unit of verse receives support from other sources. The significance of the alternating refrains sometimes found in CM stanzas is noteworthy.

The Farmer's Curs't Wife

Davis, No. 46E, p. 599. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



Here the independent, distinctive character of the repeated refrain makes it impossible to reckon such a stanza anything but a quatrain whose unit is the short line. Refrain patterns of the sort occur in considerable number when many texts are examined, and their influence is toward fixing in the mind the notion of the subdivision of the long line as the most natural way to partition any stanza analogously constructed.

The same notion is strongly suggested by the analogy of another stanza pattern which we have not yet analyzed. This is the Long Meter form, discussed in the ensuing chapter. Its quatrain of short lines is a clear-cut and unmistakable figure. Unlike CM, its short lines are, one and all, filled with syllables, but its number of measures in each verse is exactly the same as in CM, i. e. four measures to each short line.

Adding all of these considerations together, it seems to me that the structure of language in CM points to a major cesura at the ends of the long lines, and minor cesuras at the ends of the short lines. These points of division we seem naturally to observe in our reading of the stanza, and it follows that they should be indicated in our typographical representation of the rhythmic pattern. Perhaps the purpose is adequately achieved

in the couplet versification. I believe, however, that the trick of designating both the major and minor rhythmic divisions, in their relative degrees of importance, is managed better by the scheme of the quatrain. The couplet suggests a close continuity and rapid onward sweep, and does admirable service in expressing these qualities in septenaries where they are wanted, as in Chapman's Iliad. But in balladry the minor cesuras are of more importance than they are in the work just cited, and it appears to me that the short line quatrain more accurately suggests their true value.

The printed quatrain, too, seems to exhibit more clearly the balanced quadruple division of the stanza as a metrical form. The relative shortness of the second and fourth verses suggests the rests which must be observed at their conclusion, and which, when so observed, balance off the four syllabic measures of the other alternate lines. On the other hand, the first and third verses mark strongly the four-stress rhythmic swing, which must be followed in the other lines if the rhythm of the whole stanza is to be clearly defined in the reading.

## SUMMARY

In the above pages I have attempted to rationalize the customary historical conception of CM, and also to come to a decision as to what pattern is most reasonably justified by the facts of its structure, both in and out of folk-song. My conclusion is that, for reasons both musical and poetic, the quatrain is ordinarily the superior vehicle of expression. When the tunes are themselves phrasal couplets, exceptions must occur. In handling these, were I to be given that responsibility, I should disregard other considerations and be guided by the musical form alone, setting them down in text as couplets, for I believe that the musical phrasing ought to count as the ultimate and highest court of appeal.

I hope the observations I have made may at some time prove useful to some one who is studying this question. But I cannot help wondering whether, perhaps after all, the psychological realities which guide our intelligent collectors are not just as safe a guide. Perhaps we should ask only the general questions: What total effect does a given tune have upon the singer or hearer? How does he instinctively conceive its form? In what way does he most naturally recognize it as consisting of organized parts? In my own case, of course, the reply to such interrogations differs in no way from the gist of what I have set down, that the musical phrase is the natural guide. And what few conversations on the subject I have enjoyed with folk-singers themselves leaves me certain that they think of the matter in the same way.

Chapter Six  
LONG METER

The CM stanza which has just been discussed is the commonest stanzaic pattern in balladry, being about twice as common as its nearest rival, the Long Meter<sup>1</sup> stanza (4.4.4.4.) now the object of attention. In round numbers, CM claims about half of all ballad stanzas, while LM places second with about a fourth of the total. The following tabulation will show the relative prevalence of these characteristic types in Child and in the folk-song collections.

	<u>Number of</u>				
<u>Collection</u>	<u>Texts</u>	<u>Examined</u>	<u>CM</u>	<u>LM</u>	<u>Both Together</u>
Child	305	168 (55%)	84 (28%)	252 (83%)	
Greig	76	48 (63%)	13 (17%)	61 (80%)	
Campbell & Sh.	55	20 (36%)	13 (24%)	33 (60%)	
Smith	11	7 (64%)	3 (27%)	10 (91%)	
Cox	25	8 (32%)	11 (44%)	19 (76%)	
Davis	43	25 (58%)	3 (7%)	28 (65%)	
Barry	45	21 (47%)	12 (27%)	33 (74%)	
J.F.S.S.	}	41	17 (41%)	14 (34%)	31 (75%)
Broadwood					
Baring-Gould					

Comparative Totals

Child	305	55%	28%	83%	
Folk-Song	}	296	49%	26%	74%
Collections					

The above percentages are calculated only to the nearest tenth. I have examined the A-version of each ballad represented. Sharp's volume One Hundred English Folk-Songs has been excluded from this and other statistical comparisons for the reason that the contents of that collection are specially selected for purposes of musical performance, and are therefore (when it comes to counting types) not fairly representative of balladry in a general way. In the chart I have grouped together the contents of Broadwood, Baring-Gould, and J. F. S. S. only for convenience, since these collections individually contain so few different ballads.

In defense of myself and other students of this subject who have busied themselves with the patient work of tabulating ballad material of various kinds, I feel constrained to plead that the nature of the aforesaid material, rather than careless observation, must be to blame for the fact that the results of different investigators of the same phenomenon never quite tally. For example, in counting CM texts, are we going to restrict

<sup>1</sup>

This name, like Common Meter, is adopted from hymn-book terminology. Again it will be convenient to take refuge in an abbreviated form. Hereafter Long Meter = LM.

the category to narrative stanzas proper, like the following? (Child 275A)

It fell about the Martinmas time,  
And a gay time it was then,  
When our good wife got puddings to make,  
And she's boidd them in the pan.

Or should we include those having internal alternating refrains, such as this one? (Child 277A)

She wadna bake, she wadna brew,  
Hollin, green hollin  
For spoiling o her comely hue.  
Bend your bow, Robin.

If so, should we also include ballads whose CM stanzas are followed by end refrains, of this sort? (Child 274A)

'What's this now, goodwife?  
What's this I see?  
How came this horse here,  
Without the leave o me?'

'A horse?' quo she.  
'Ay, a horse,' quo he.

Or, still further, what disposition is to be made of ballads composed of CM stanzas, but containing stanzas in other forms as well?

In my classification I have included under CM all of the above sub-types, and have followed the same policy in categorizing the LM ballads. That is, I have counted as examples of the type all ballads whose stanza pattern prevaillingly shows the form in question, whether refrains and irregular stanzas are present or not. This has clearly seemed most advisable. After all, the sub-types just reviewed are all built fundamentally on the same pattern, and the resulting statistical picture bids fair to be the most realistic one which could be drawn up. The chart shows that roughly three-quarters of all ballad stanzas belong to one or the other of the two major types. It is interesting to notice that while the proportion of CM and LM stanzas is highest in Child, his percentage is only slightly above the average of the folk-song books. The difference may be largely accounted for, no doubt, by reason of the special (non-musical) character of Child's material. The loss of refrains or other stanzaic elaborations from ballad texts often leaves them in one or the other of the two common forms under consideration. The chart, in fine, ought to be, I suppose, a fairly reliable index to the approximate proportion of the types in popular tradition.

#### STRUCTURE OF LONG METER

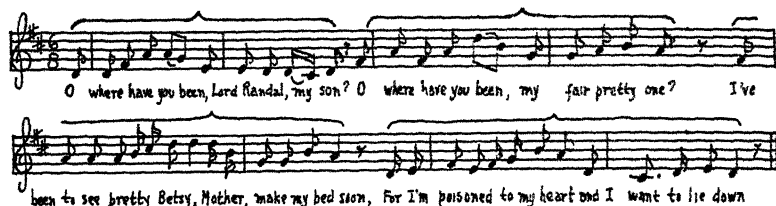
I have earlier referred to LM as a well-defined quatrain of



four-measure verses, each of which contains four heard stresses. That this is the case I believe the following examples of the type will demonstrate. First to be noticed is the way in which the stanza is divided up in the folk-songs by the musical phrasing. The following melody of the form a,b,b,a clearly indicates a separation of the stanza in a corresponding fashion.

Lord Randall

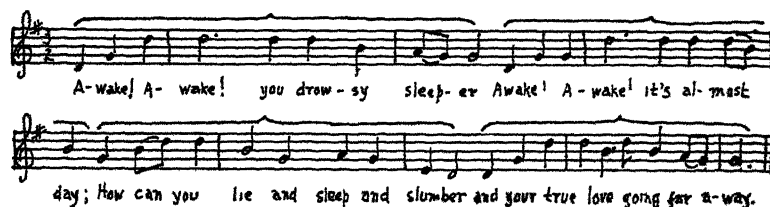
Barry, No. 12A, p. 47. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press  
(Notation follows Barry)



In the next example the four divisions are marked by no inter-phrasal rests, but by melodic cadence alone. The melodic form is a,a,b,a.

Awake! Awake!

Campbell and Sharp, No. 47A, p. 173. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



The melody of the LM stanza so clearly and consistently marks it a quatrain pattern of verses that it is idle to labor the point further. However, several other considerations pointing to the same diagnosis ought to be mentioned in passing. Professor Gerould has called attention to the stanza of Lord Randall as an indubitable example of quatrain arrangement by virtue of the phrase of refrain which forms the ending of each verse.<sup>2</sup> Other factors which likewise tend to mark the four-stress line as the unit, are the alternating internal refrains not infrequently found:<sup>3</sup> (Child 15B)

<sup>2</sup>

The Ballad of Tradition, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup>

This stanza, like GM, is sometimes found with end refrain. For example, see Child 189. I have found seven other instances among Child's A and B versions. They are to be found also here and there among the folk-song collections. See later chapter on refrains.

There is a feast in your father's house,  
 The broom blooms bonnie and so it is fair  
 It becomes you and me to be very douce  
 And we'll never gang up to the broom nae mair

-- and the numerous ballads in which each line in the stanza is part of the rhyme scheme. This situation, of course, plainly shows on the part of the folk-composer an awareness and assumption of four separate lines.

(Cf. p. 52) Early, early in the spring  
 I shipped on board to serve my king,  
 Leaving my dearest dear behind,  
 Who oftentimes told me her heart was mine

LM, as Professor Croll has observed,<sup>4</sup> is capable of a slower and steadier movement than is CM. This quality, accompanied by remarkable smoothness of finish, is patent in stanzas where the regularity of two syllables to the measure is preserved throughout, or suffers only slight exceptions. (Campbell and Sharp, No. 47A, p. 173. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

I|will not|go and|ask my|father,  
 For|he lies|on his|bed at|rest,  
 And|in his|hands he|holds a|weapon  
 To|kill the|man that|I love|best.

Alternating rhyme, abcb, or occasionally abab, is the most common scheme in LM, but the couplet form aabb (as illustrated a moment ago) is often found. In Child I have found 13 instances of the latter among the 102 LM stanzas I have examined there. The proportion is much higher in the American collections. In Barry, and in Campbell and Sharp, about half of the LM stanzas rhyme in couplets. I cannot account for the difference except on the vague ground of regional peculiarity. Couplet rhymes, by the way, are not peculiar to LM, but occur sometimes in other patterns.

The reader will at once notice the difference in syllabication between the following stanza and that printed immediately above. Examples like these dispose of any theories or notions that the measures of ballad verse have no internal rhythmic patterns of their own. The stanza, too, contains a fine instance of the powerful and unabashed wrenched accent very common in ballad texts.<sup>5</sup> (Child 170A)

4

The Rhythm of English Verse, p. 38.

5

These are matters which are taken up for discussion later, in the chapter on ballad measure. Many other important questions of stress and rhythm connected with this stanza must likewise be postponed for later criticism. The scansion provided in the present chapter are, of course, nothing but rough sketches of the rhythmic skeleton, since this is all that we are immediately concerned with.

Queen|Jane was in|labour full|six weeks and|more,  
 And the|women were|weary, and|fain would give|o'er:  
 'O|women, O|women, as|women ye|be,  
 Rip|open my|two sides and|save my ba-|by!'

The example of LM to follow is, because of its variety of syllabication, more characteristic of the pattern than either two shown above. (Child 15A)

2/4 (4) My|boy was|scarcely|ten years|auld, (4)  
 (4) Whan|he went|to an|unco|land, (4)  
 (4) Where|wind never|blew, nor|cocks ever|crew, (4)  
 (4) O-|hon for|my son,|Leesome|Brand! x (4)

The time-signature attached to this stanza should be noted. It represents the first instance we have encountered of any form of duple time.

Rare, and very curious in appearance, is the LM stanza made up of a rhymed narrative couplet plus a refrain couplet: (Davis, No. 9B, p. 134. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press)

"On,|little|babes, if|you was|mine,  
 I'd|dress you|up in|scarlet|fine."  
 |All day|long and I|love you|all,  
 |Down by the|greenwood|side-y|Oh!

The structural difference between the LM stanza pattern and that of CM, though important (especially in connection with matters of stress), is slight and simple. As Professor Groll has pointed out, it "consists only in the fact that the rest at the end of each long line is filled with syllables."<sup>6</sup>

#### COMPARISON WITH COMMON METER

The following comparative scansion will illustrate the assertion just made. It is important, in comparing the two forms, to notice that the purely metrical structure of the stanza is exactly the same in both. The only difference between them is in the relative distribution of syllables within the same fundamental metrical scheme.

(1) Child 58A:                      Common Meter (4.3.4.3.)

The	King sits	in Dum-	ferling	towne,
	Drinking the	blude-reid	wine:	
O	whar will	I get	guid sai-	lor,
To	sail this	schip of	mine?	

(2) Child 166:                      Long Meter (4.4.4.4.)

Through-	out a	garden	greene and	gay,
A	seemlye	sight itt	was to	see
How	fflowers did	flourish	fresh and	gay
And	birds doe	sing me-	lodious-	ly.

The close similarity of structure between two stanza-forms which together embrace three-quarters of all recorded texts will account, I think, for the reputation the texts have had with some critics as being all fundamentally based on the four-stress line. The same close similarity must also account for the notion that the LM stanza is a variation of, or a development out of, the more ubiquitous CM pattern. Mr. G. Stewart, for example, has explained its occurrence as being the result of an attempt (presumably by ballad composers or singers) to introduce rhymes in final syllables of relatively weak stress.<sup>7</sup> At least this is what I make of his discussion, though the point at issue is treated in a somewhat difficult fashion.<sup>8</sup> As to this interesting conjecture, I have not been able to discover any convincing reason why it should be either true or untrue.

## THEORY AND CONJECTURE

Not often do we find comment on the reasons why certain stanza forms exist, but the LM pattern has aroused the curiosity of more than one theorist. Professor Croll makes a good surmise, I believe, when he suggests: [LM] "appears...in many popular ballads, doubtless because of the form of the music to which they were sung..."<sup>9</sup> It seems quite probable that at least some LM texts should have taken their form for musical reasons; it is not unlikely, for instance, that some of them were composed to fit tunes which necessitated a structure of four-measure verses.

Carrying the matter further, can a generalized theory of musical causation be used to account for the traditional existence of LM itself? I have thought hard over such an hypothesis, and the thinking has left me very doubtful. However, a bit of speculation on this subject may be profitable -- or at least harmless -- if we continue to bear in mind that we are only speculating.

A theory that the LM pattern itself has somehow grown out of musical causation would mean a habit among the folk of composing ballads with melodic form as the guide, not only in the original instance, but in the long course of traditional variation and reworking, and affecting not only LM, but other stanza

<sup>7</sup> G. Stewart, "The Meter of the Popular Ballad," P.M.L.A. Vol. 40 (1925) p. 962 and preceding.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 962. "The rhyme is usually upon a primary stress [i. e. in CM], but in a considerable number of cases [i. e. in LM] the line [i. e. the short line of CM] is apparently lengthened by the occurrence of secondary stress rhyme." (I hope my interpolations are correct.)

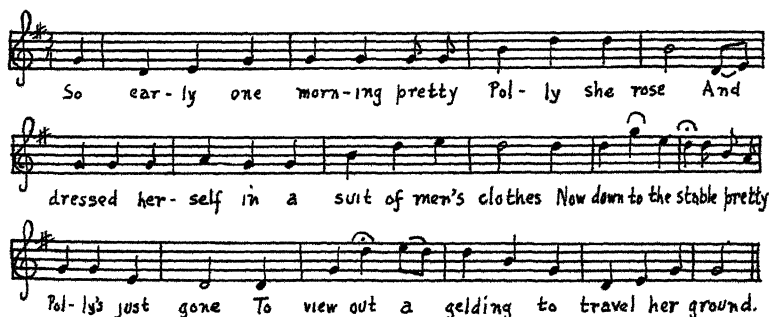
<sup>9</sup> M. W. Croll, op. cit., p. 38.

forms in general. It would mean, too, that a class of tunes exists, and has existed, to which LM is, and can be, easily fitted, and to which CM is not, and cannot be, easily fitted; otherwise melodic form would be simply an indifferent matter to the composer, and could not possibly play any part in governing the formation of the stanza.

Apparently neither of these theoretical consequences can be fully substantiated as facts by evidence now at hand. Let us consider the latter one first. That a special class of tunes exists for the accommodation of LM is true only with damaging reservations. Mr. Stewart has noticed the metrical similarity often observable between tunes set to LM and those set to CM, and has concluded that "both types fit readily into the same musical structures."<sup>10</sup> This means, no doubt, that always, or at least ordinarily, a stanza of either sort can easily be set to the same tune. He is right in part, for sometimes such an interchange would offer little trouble indeed, especially to a singer well versed in the tricks of traditional technique. It appears to be generally the case among the minority of LM melodies composed in single (usually 3/4) time. Such a tune is the following:

Polly Oliver

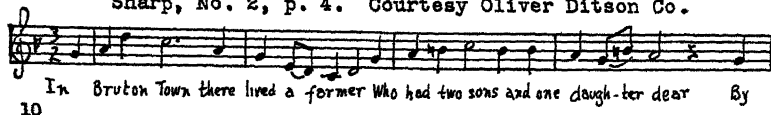
Campbell and Sharp, No. 44, p. 167. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



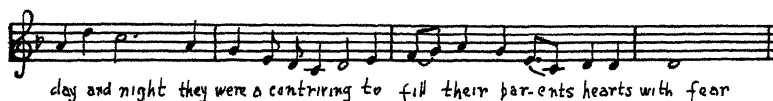
The critic, however, has overlooked an important matter. Aside from purely metrical measurement, the peculiar qualities of melody and rhythm in a majority of tunes set to LM make it either virtually impossible or extremely difficult and awkward to fit CM stanzas into them. What poet or peasant could ever successfully set a CM stanza to such a tune as the following, or to any of the numerous others that can be found like it?

Bruton Town

Sharp, No. 2, p. 4. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



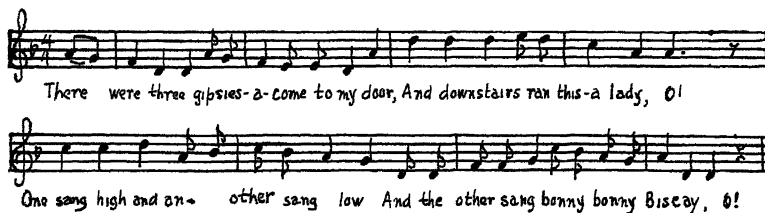
<sup>10</sup> G. Stewart, loc. cit., p. 948.



This is a characteristic rhythmic pattern among LMtunes composed in double time. There is in it an important prolongation of the note corresponding to the second stress of the verse. In the singing of the stanza, this strong emphasis is felt to require a compensatory balancing by the syllables at the ends of the verses, and the verses accordingly cannot be shortened. A CM stanza, in other words, is totally unfitted for use in such a melody, and cannot be employed in that capacity. Wherever this is true, the tune undoubtedly operates in tradition to preserve the LM pattern of the text -- it must at least assist in doing so, and throw its weight on that side. But the existence of the melodies where this situation does not exist (and in Greig, by the way, there is at least one actual instance where CM and LM are both set to the same tune)<sup>11</sup> disposes of any possible generalization that the music, in all instances, must have been the governing factor in stanza development, even supposing that the habits of composition and recomposition practised among the folk always involved reference to melody as the guide to stanza form.

But are we justified in assuming that such a habit of composition was prevalent in tradition? I doubt it. In some ways, it must be admitted, the assumption is supported by evidence. The wrenched accents common to LM imply a following of melody in the fashioning of verse, or perhaps a verse composition in terms of music, which practically amounts to the same thing. The wrenched accents, particularly those of a blatant sort, are not natural to language alone, but often are scarcely noticeable in language as sung. Then there is the occurrence, here and there, of CM narrative stanzas having the refrain syllable O added to the second and fourth verses, apparently for the purpose of suiting the stanza to the music.

The Wrangle Taggle Gipsies, O!  
Sharp, No. 5, p. 13. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



<sup>11</sup>

Cf. Greig, LXXVIII, 2, p. 182, and LXXXII, a, p. 194.

The result is the formation of a regular LM pattern. It is evident that the rhythm of the tune requires the addition of the refrain syllable.

All of these considerations appear to indicate, though not to demonstrate, that in some instances in tradition, melodic form has been the determining factor in the construction of the LM stanza.

Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that the composers and recomposers of ballads, all along the traditional line, have been guided by considerations of a poetic nature. The rhyme schemes, especially those in which every verse plays a part, show that the folk-composer was poet as well as musician, and his attention to the structure of his text-stanza may have been, as a rule, an important part of his creative or adaptive work. The study of variants also indicates great unlikelihood in folk-tradition of any habit of looking to melody alone as the guide to stanza form. This can be seen in the remarkable preservation of the pattern in question among its musically variant tunes (Cf. p. 55 ff.). Stanza pattern is perhaps the most stable and indestructible thing about a ballad. Ordinarily the stanza is able, apparently by virtue of its poetic strength, to plow its traditional way amid a bewildering variety of musical accompaniments without losing its identity; it seems, in some ballads, never to be destroyed or fundamentally changed by different musical affiliations. It would seem that, as a rule, whenever a LM stanza already formed had acquired a different tune, either as the result of gradual evolution or by direct transfer at the hands of a singer, the text-stanza had legislated the form of the accompaniment, seldom the reverse. Otherwise one would expect a variety of stanza patterns among the variants of the same ballad set to different and unrelated tunes. The new tunes must have been developed or chosen to suit, or else made over to suit, and the dictatorship of the text-stanza would be the fact in either situation.

If the above reasoning is valid, we must conclude that in the preservation of the LM stanza in tradition, the language structure has played a very important rôle, and has been assisted at many points in doing so by the concomitant influence of the music. Both text and melody seem to have worked together, on the whole, in preserving the LM pattern, and the traditional processes involved must, in the final analysis, be reckoned as a form of creation, and must be thought of as embracing and affecting not LM alone, but any stanza pattern common to folk-song.

The above conclusion has to do with the working of traditional processes upon stanzas already formed and in active circulation. But what relative parts were played by text and tune in the original composition of a given ballad? This particular phase of the general problem is still more difficult. One can do little but guess.

My remarks so far have been intended to imply, with reference to original composers, a possible choice among several methods of composition.

(1) The composer (or composers) could go to work as a poet, fashion the stanza, then invent or find a tune to fit it, making perhaps some slight adjustments in the latter case. In his composition he might conceivably imitate the text form of some other ballad familiar to him, then use, in his fresh creation, the tune of the other ballad, or some other ready-made melody that would fit, or perhaps a new one invented, along traditional principles, by himself. In all of these situations, however, the text-stanza would be first to take form in his mind.

(2) The maker (makers if preferable) could begin structurally from the tune, having made or learned one which he liked, and fashion a stanza to fit the melody. Perhaps, having the idea of a ballad story in his head, he would remember some favorite tune and deliberately arrange his lines to fit its phrases. This method, I suppose, would most nearly fit a hypothesis of musical determination of stanza pattern, the theory here being, of course, specifically applied to the original inception of a particular ballad.

(3) Not quite like either of the above, is a third (and I believe a very likely) possibility. The singer could compose words and music together, following some traditional model, without ever being conscious of either as separate arts, each verse being simultaneously conceived as a musical phrase. He would simply imitate a ballad, in other words, allowing priority of conception to neither of the two concomitant phases of creation, both being unified in his mind and simultaneous in their reality.

While it seems inherently reasonable to suppose that the mysterious composers of ballads have had these possibilities of choice constantly before them, we really have no evidence to show which method was most often employed in practice, or that the methods, as outlined, are actually mutually exclusive. In the accidental course of things it may have been that any one, or all three, modes of approach were realized in the creation of a particular ballad song.

As to how and why different stanza forms have come into existence as traditional patterns to begin with, that is a problem which may, perhaps, lie at the root of the whole matter, but it is one which, for obvious reasons, we cannot attempt to cope with. There is, it seems, a real tendency in folk-song (and in its accompanying folk-poetry) to achieve existence in four-stress lines. Can it be possible that the figure and duration of this rhythmic unit answers to some obscure pattern of sense in the human organism? Any answer to such a question would, of course, have to be based upon close study of traditional patterns on an international scale. But even if the question could be answered affirmatively, we should still be a long distance away from understanding the peculiarities of the different patterns which such a reality would underlie. Can the various traditional patterns be, at bottom, only the fortuitous results of historical accident operating upon the inherent rhythmic sense and mental perception common to the human race? These are only questions.



Chapter Seven  
OTHER FORMS OF STANZA

About three-quarters of our recorded ballad texts, I have said, fit into the CM or LM schemes of versification. It has been shown, further, that the ballads composed in these patterns are related, in various ways, to elements of refrain. In some ballads the stanzas are strictly and purely narrative, associated with no refrains of any sort. In other cases the stanzas involve alternating refrain lines of an internal order. In still other texts, the narrative stanzas, whether in CM or LM, are followed by end refrains of different kinds. To convey a clearer notion of how these types and sub-types are distributed in circulation, I have prepared a tabulation of their relative occurrence among the important collections. A few of the ballads listed under the heading With End Refrain, it must be understood, contain elements of internal refrain also.

I frankly warn the reader that this and other extended tabulations printed in the dissertation are only approximately correct. There are so many ballads whose structures show various irregularities that, were I to make a second tabulation of the same material, I am certain that my own interpretations would not duplicate themselves in every instance, and that the resulting figures would not be exactly the same as in the first count. In order to secure a mathematically precise classification, categories would have to be subdivided and resubdivided to such a degree that no general types could be set up. I have decided it is better for this study to group under general types all those forms which are fundamentally based on the typical conception, disregarding small differences and variations. This at least provides an approximate impression of the main lines of cleavage, and that, I presume, is about all the benefit there is to be derived from such tabulations in any case.

Collection	Ballads in CM and LM	CM			LM		
		Narrative Stanza	Alternating Refrain	End Refrain	Narrative Stanza	Alternating Refrain	End Refrain
Child	252	146	9	13	63	14	7
Barry	33	14	1	6	7	3	2
Davis	28	18	1	6	3	0	0
Cox	19	6	0	2	8	1	2
Smith	10	4	0	3	3	0	0
Greig	61	33	3	12	6	5	2
Campbell and Sharp	33	13	2	5	11	1	1
J.F.S.E. Broadwood	31	14	0	3	10	4	0
Baring-Gould							

In the table above I have counted only the A-version of each ballad represented. The chart exhibits one or two noteworthy things. In Child the proportion of alternating refrains, as compared with end refrains, is higher than in the folk-song volumes. (Cf. comment on p. 20.) Noteworthy also is the pre-vaillingly higher relative proportion of end refrains in CM as

compared with LM. It seems too pronounced and consistent to be accidental. As to accounting for it, my conjecture would be (and it is only conjecture) that the relative shortness and feeling of rapidity in the CM stanza, apparent in the folk-song as well as in the text alone, facilitates the end refrain, in an artistic sense, better than does the slower, more sustained movement of LM. The latter, in other words, carries with it a more striking air of finish and conclusion at the final cadence. This impressionistic surmise I am by no means certain of myself as an adequate explanation, and mention it only for whatever it may be worth.

In the preceding analysis of CM and LM, the reader will have noticed, I confined attention to purely narrative stanzas and to those containing alternating refrains, and failed to comment on the stanzas associated with end refrains. The omission was intentional. We have studied so far only the CM and LM patterns as such. Their association with additional refrain elements is a matter of importance to this study, and so is the variety of forms which such refrains assume. But all of this can be more appropriately and effectively considered in connection with the direct criticism of the refrain, and we shall therefore relegate it to the later chapter under that caption.

The small minority of texts not included in the above categories are too variegated to allow, in this chapter, anything like an exhaustive classification or description. But such an achievement, at any rate, is beside the purpose of the investigation. We are interested here in what is characteristic or significant. Such terms can be applied with justice to a number of stanza forms not yet commented on or illustrated, and to these we are now ready to give at least passing attention.

#### THE RHYMED COUPLET

One of the most curious and most critically noticed stanzas in the Child collection is that consisting of a rhymed couplet of four-stress verses. No. 1A\* is an interesting instance. A sample stanza follows:

Thys spake þe fend to þe mayd:  
'Beleue on me, mayd, to day.

Professor Gerould has counted in Child's collection 39 texts having this stanza.<sup>1</sup> My own count, based only on the A and B versions, does not run so high, but among this restricted group I have encountered 11 unmistakable instances, and 10 or 15 others which would probably be open to that interpretation.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., p. 126.

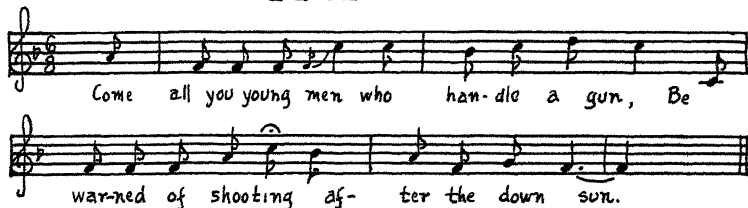
Without reference to the arrangement of syllables in the music it is often anybody's guess whether a stanza of this sort ought to be reckoned a couplet pattern (4.4.) or a quatrain (3.3.3.3.). Instances where no doubt exists, in my opinion, are the following: 1A\* 5A, 6A, 7A\*, 17G, 24A, 181B, 184, 203A, 203B, 238A. An example of the doubtful sort is 183A. My count is based on Child's notation.

group, though small, is numerous enough to be significant in regard to the peculiar structure of its members.

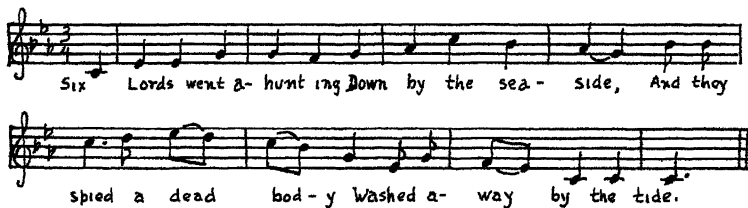
There seems to be a fairly uniform opinion that the rhymed couplet is a well-established stanza in traditional balladry. The contents of the folk-song volumes hardly bear out such an idea: among 550 ballads which I have examined, only 7 couplet stanzas have appeared. In Greig, Nos. VII, 2; LXXXI, C; in Sharp 21, 27, 29, and in Campbell and Sharp 40B have the form in question. It also appears in J.A.F.L. XXX, 359. In the other collections I was unable to find it at all. This proportion, relative to the total, is considerably smaller than the proportion in Child. The disparity may be accidental. Otherwise I can advance only the following explanation to account for it:

To begin with, the rhymed couplets among the folk-songs show that, in rare instances, such a stanza is a traditional reality, for those at hand for study are set to complete biphrasal melodies. The following will illustrate:

Mollie Bond  
J.A.F.L. XXX, 359.



The Duke of Bedford  
Sharp, No. 21, p. 50. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



Now, in the texts of these songs (and of the others cited above) each measure usually contains three or more syllables, which add up to somewhere between 11 and 14 to the verse, in most cases. The syllabic magnitude of these lines apparently makes it possible to set them to melody, for I have never found a couplet tune set to verses whose measures averaged two syllables apiece (or totalled 7 to 9 per line) as sometimes happens in the Child couplets (see Child Nos. 1A\*, 5A, 6A, 7A\*, 17G, 184). In fact, if one attempts to fit couplets of the shorter type -- like these in Child -- to the melodies accompanying the longer

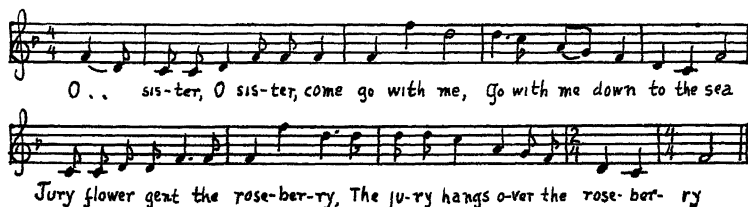
ones, one becomes convinced that they do not contain enough verbal material to build up a song in accordance with traditional practice. For instance, the experiment may be made of attempting to sing the following couplet to either of the bi-phrasal tunes printed immediately above. (Child 5A, stanza No. 1)

Gil Brenton has sent oer the fame,  
He's woo'd a wife an brought her hame.

It seems probable, therefore, that the Child couplets of the shorter form, including the familiar group at the beginning of the collection, are, in reality, fragments of once longer stanzas which originally contained refrains of some sort lost in the often careless and always hazardous transfer from singer to printing house. In a stanza like the following one, the two lines of end refrain could most easily be disregarded by a collector whose interest was centered upon the story element and not upon the music. The rhymed couplet would be left for the printed page.

#### The Two Sisters

Campbell and Sharp, No. 4A, p. 16. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



O . . sis-ter, O sis-ter, come go with me, Go with me down to the sea

Jury flower gent the rose-ber-ry, The ju-ry hangs o-ver the rose-ber- ry

Child's volumes contain a number of texts in the form of two-stress quatrains, but since these curiosities do not appear to have been truly such in their traditional form, I am bringing them forward at this point as probable examples of the couplet structure. No. 181B is an instance. (See also 183A, 183B, 210A, 210B.)

3/8	(2)	Open the   gates,	(2)
	(2)	And   let him come   in;	(2)
	(2)	He is   my brother   Huntly,	(2)
	(2)	He'll   do him nas   harm.	(2)

It seems probable that, if the music could be consulted, a couplet arrangement would appear more proper for ballads of this group. The few stanzas of this kind which appear in the musical collections, as we have seen, are more properly couplets than quatrains. Child's headnote to the ballad above signifi-

cantly mentions that it was taken from recitation. Most of this group, very likely, represent merely variant notations of the 4.4. pattern, though published as four-verse stanzas.

In folk-song, it may be said, the two-stress verse is not a regular phenomenon in any sense, a circumstance which may, perhaps, be due to the fact that the normal musical phrase is too long in extent to accommodate such a brief expression. Occasionally a genuine instance turns up as part of an elaborate refrain, but these are exceptional features associated in their stanzas with prevailingly longer lines.

#### THE QUATRAIN OF SEVENS

Some of the patterns now to be noticed have already appeared in connection with their melodies in the first chapter. This time they will be viewed with reference to text structure. In setting them down as stanzas I have in all cases possible been guided by the principle already laid down that the musical structure is the criterion of versification. It would be a great convenience if definite names of some sort could be attached to some of these well-established figures, and in a few instances peculiar traits bring such titles readily to mind. However, I have decided to use simply the metrical formulas involved as a method of designation, since these, even if sometimes a trifle awkward, are more self-explanatory than any other names could be.

The quatrain of sevens, we have already seen, is like two CM stanzas added together, yet different from such a combination in several important respects. Set, as it is, to the long compound quadriphrasal melody, the 7.7.7.7. pattern is a completely coherent melodic quantity. The poetry, too, of the stanza is free from any suggestion of a medial bipartition of material, for it possesses a closely organized unity of structure and sense. I have an illustration from Child to show how plainly, when separated from music, the poetry of the stanza manifests its structural design. (No. 46A)

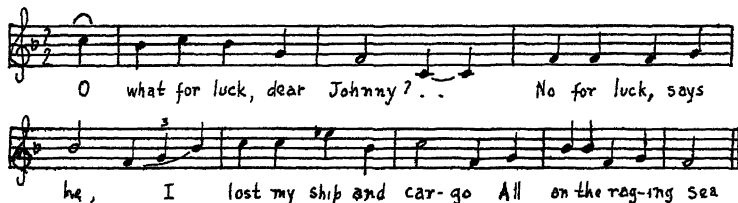
- 3/8 (7) The | laird of | Bristol's | daughter was | in the | woods walk-ing, | (8)  
 (7) And | by came | Captain | Wether- | bourn, a | servant to the | king; | (8)  
 (7) And he | said | to his | livery | man, Wer't | not a- | gainst the | law, | (8)  
 (7) I would | tak her | to mine | ain | bed, and | lay her | neist the | wa. | (8)

The reading of the stanza shows that each of its four verses, though having seven heard stresses, has the duration of eight full measures, the eighth measure in all cases but one (in the third line) containing an important rest. The wrenched accent is strictly required, unless one chooses to disregard the rhyme scheme in his reading.

Stanzas of the form 3.3.3.3. occur a number of times in Child, and less frequently, but sometimes, elsewhere. Since this stanza has not so far appeared in this treatise in company with its music, I am setting down one with melody from Campbell and Sharp, and also appending what I take to be the scansion of its poetic structure.

The Green Bed

No. 48, p. 176. (Second stanza) Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons



3/8	(3)	O what for luck, dear Johnny?	x γ	(4)
	(3)	No for luck, says he;	x	(4)
	(3)	I lost my ship and cargo	x γ	(4)
	(3)	All on the raging sea.	x γ	(4)

The distinctive feature of this stanza is that prevaillingly a full rest measure occurs at the end of the line.

Sometimes in ballads where such stanzas are the rule, one or more members will possess syllables in the final measure of the third verse, thus forming a stanza of the pattern 3.3.4.3., known in hymnology as Short Meter.<sup>3</sup> This happens in the ballad from which the above stanza was taken. Its tenth member reads as follows:

3/8	(3)	My green beds they are empty	x	(4)
	(3)	And have been all this week,	x	(4)
	(4)	A- waiting for you and daughter Polly		(4)
	(3)	To take a pleasant sleep.	x γ	(4)

(As to the stressing of Polly, wrenched accent is not indicated by the poetry, nor is it indicated by the music, where the stress falls on the note corresponding to the first syllable of the word, resulting in a normal pronunciation.)

3

Short Meter is the prevailing form in a few texts, one of which, for example, is in Campbell and Sharp, No. 45, p. 168.

Sometimes the first verse, as well as the third, of a stanza, will be similarly provided with syllables, forming an ordinary CM model. Occasionally all three of the forms just noticed occur in different stanzas of the same ballad, all set, of course, to the same fundamental tune, though slight adjustments need to be made each time in the music to take care of the variant syllabifications. This is what happens in the ballad from which the above two examples were derived. Such a text, of course, shows how closely related these forms are. In balladry the stanzas 3.3.3.3. and 3.3.4.3. may rightly be reckoned as variations of the vastly more prevalent CM pattern.

The occurrence of these three stanza structures inside the same short ballad brings us upon a slight critical matter which might be commented on in passing. Sometimes critics have been sorely puzzled over the question of what stanza form a ballad has, when some stanzas appear to indicate one pattern and some another. It seems to be felt necessary to attach some single and final label to the ballad which will apply to it throughout, and the zealous effort to discover such a label seems to postulate a consistent uniformity, perhaps hard to recognize, in all of the stanzas of the text. But frequently such a notion fails to square with the facts. It must not be overlooked that stanza pattern in ballads, like everything else connected with them, is riddled with irregularities and exceptions. Often a text appears to have several different stanza patterns for the reason that it actually does have them, and no jugglery of scansion can ever reconcile them as identical structures. Melody in the hands of folk-singers is easily adjustable to all such minor variations. It is usually not a difficult trick, even for a neophyte, to group the few added syllables of an elongated line (if the protraction is not extreme) so as to effect a graceful conjunction with the measures and rhythmic stresses of the music. When this is done, of course the irregularity of verse is swallowed up in the music, and cannot rightly be said to exist at all in the song-stanza alone. It will appear at once, however, as soon as the text-stanza is read as a form of poetry, for the natural stresses of the language force the elongation upon our attention. For instance, the following two lines --

1. And let me pay my reckoning bill
2. Awaiting for you and daughter Polly

occur in separate stanzas of The Green Bed (reference above) as irregular four-stress verses. Reading either line as a three-stress verse is poetically inept, if not impossible; but the embodiment of both lines in the regular song-stanza is a fait accompli (see Campbell and Sharp, p. 176 - 177).

#### THE LINE OF SIX STRESSES

Among ballad texts, verses of six stresses can occasionally be found, though I have not discovered any instance of a quatrain entirely made up of them. Cox, No. 50, and Campbell and Sharp, No. 41 show throughout a prevalence of six-stress verses,

but every stanza in both ballads shows some deviation, most often in the form of a single seven-stress verse. The latter text will illustrate: (Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

3/8

- (7) She|says: My|little|soldier,|I would|freely|be your|wife,| (8)  
 (6) If I|knowed my|cruel old|father would|surely|spare your|life. (8)  
 (6) He|drew his|pistol and|sword,|and hung them|by his|side,| (8)  
 (6) And|swore he|would get|married,|let what|would be|tried. (8)

This stanza would be completely built of sixes, were it not for the seven stresses of the first line. It will be noted that I have scanned the verses with eight measures apiece, allowing strong cesuras at mid-point and termination of every line but the first. This may seem at first sight an unnecessary procedure, but I think it is advisable on account of the strong alternating stress. If the attempt is made to read the verses as if they actually had only as many measures as heard stresses, the following unacceptable result is obtained.

3/8

- (7) She|says: My|little|soldier|I would|freely|be your|wife (7)  
 (6) If I|knowed my|cruel old|father would|surely|spare your|life. (6)  
 (6) He|drew his|pistol and|sword and|hung them|by his|side, (6)  
 (6) And|swore he|would get|married,|let what|would be|tried. (6)

Though the quatrain of sixes does not appear to exist as a regular form, a few cases of couplets in this meter are observable. Professor Gerould has called attention to Lizzie Lindsay (in Greig p. 164) in this connection.<sup>4</sup> There is good ground for the conception of the tune as a biphrasal pattern, and by reckoning it as such and following the lead of the music as far as may be in other respects as well, the following unusual but agreeable rhythmic structure results:

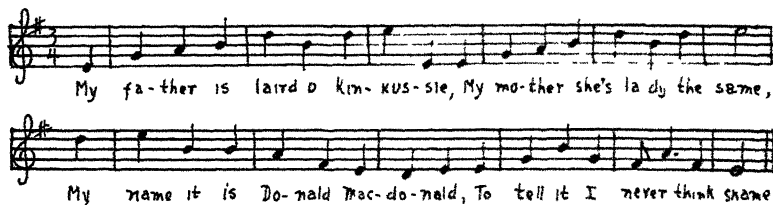
3/8

- (6) My|father is|laird o Kin-|kussie, My|mother she's|lady the|same; (6)  
 (6) My|name it is|Donald Mac-|donald, To|tell it I|never think|shame. (6)

I add the tune to illustrate the musical basis of the arrangement.



Lizzie Lindsay  
Greig, No. LXXIII, p. 164.



The alternative arrangement of the text-stanza would be the quatrain of threes, with the rest measures at the ends of the verses. While such a versification is possible, I believe the one shown above will be admitted to be a more faithful translation of the metrical values inherent in the musical form of this ballad.

#### CURIOUS AND ANOMALOUS STANZAS

The rank and file of ballads can be associated, wholly or in part, with one or another of the stanza types reviewed above. A few ballads, however, are distinguished by peculiar metrical structures not yet studied, or by unusual adaptations of the forms already shown. An account of ballad stanzas would not be satisfactory without passing attention to some of these interesting wayward members.

Professor Gerould has pointed out the anomalous character of Child's The Beggar Laddie (280). Among the folk-songs I have only encountered this curious pattern once: in Greig, No. XCVII -- a variant of the same ballad. The metrical formula of the stanza is 4.4.4.3. The rhyme scheme is quite remarkable. I print the second stanza from Child's specimen. (In the first stanza the second and third lines are identical, which is not characteristic of the text.)

- |     |     |                                     |     |
|-----|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 3/8 | (4) | 'Spindels and forls it is my trade, | (4) |
|     | (4) | An bits of sticks to them who nead, | (4) |
|     | (4) | Whelk is a gentell trade in- deed,  | (4) |
|     | (3) | Bony lassie, cane ye lea me?'   x 7 | (4) |

The ballad of Judas (Child 23) presents another curiosity. It is difficult, without the tune, to determine precisely how this ballad should be read, for the archaic text alone is a hard guide to follow. The verses appear prevalingly to have six stresses, and the stanza to follow will show what must be, roughly, the basic rhythmic movement of the whole text. (Stanza 6)

3/8 (6) 'Be stille, leue soster, bin herte be to brekel. (8)  
 (6) Wiste min louerd Crist, ful wel he wolde be wreke." (8)

Could the music be consulted, some revisions might need to be made in this interpretation. I am puzzled by what seem to be irregular seven-stress lines here and there in other stanzas of the text. Perhaps in reading, these lines should be scanned to fit the six-stress conception. Professor Gerould has given attention to the meter of this ballad, and is inclined to think of it as conforming, with the exception of stanza 3, to the regular six-stress line.<sup>5</sup>

The False Knight upon the Road (Child 3A) also offers difficulties of a metrical sort. Here again a reference to the music of the ballad, were it available, would be of the greatest assistance. Disregarding variations, the key to the fundamental rhythmic structure of this ballad poem, as it stands, is found, I believe, in the first stanza. Its peculiar quality of rhythm arises partly from the fact that its first and third verses involve a rhythmic pattern (and time signature) different from that of the second and fourth lines. This reading involves theoretical questions which cannot be discussed at this juncture, but are taken up for examination in the later chapter on the subject of measure. However, with this reservation made, perhaps the metrical notation of the following stanza will be largely self-explanatory.

4/8 (2) 'O whare are ye gaun?'  
 (4) Quo the (3/8) fause knight u-pon the road:  
 4/8 (2) 'I'm gaun to the scule,'  
 (4) Quo the (3/8) wee boy, and still he stude.

Campbell and Sharp's ballad of The Grey Cook (No. 30, p.128) exhibits a stanza of extraordinary bulk and elaboration. The length of the verses and the character of the music combine to corroborate the versification which Sharp has used, i. e. a stanza of eight lines in the metrical scheme 4.3.4.3.4.3.4.3. Noteworthy are the internal rhymes and assonance in some of the verses, especially in the seventh: "Then this fair maid she rose, and she hurried on her clothes." I have never found a narrative stanza, without refrain, whose size exceeded that of the present specimen. (Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

5  
Op. Cit., p. 128. Professor Gerould also suggests comparing this text (as a help in reading it) with the A and B versions of The Laird of Wariston (Child 194), which are metrically analogous to it, and written in less antiquated language.

All on one summer's evening when the fever were a-dawning I heard a fair maid make a  
 mourn. She was a-weeping for her father and a-grieving for her mother And a-  
 thinking all on her true love John. At last Johnny came and ne  
 found the doors all shut, And he dangled so low at the ring. Then this  
 fair maid she rose and she hurried on her clothes To make haste to let Johnny come in

- 4/8 (4) All on one summer's evening when the fever were a-dawning, (4)  
 (3) I heard a fair maid make a mourn. x | y (4)  
 (4) She was a-weeping for her father and a-grieving for her mother, (4)  
 (3) And a-thinking all on her true love John. x | x y (4)  
 (4) At last Johnny came and he found the doors all shut, (4)  
 (3) And he dangled so low at the ring. x | x (4)  
 (4) Then this fair maid she rose and she hurried on her clothes (4)  
 (3) To make haste to let Johnny come in. x | x x (4)

The exceptional stanzas just observed form but a small fraction of the peculiar and extraordinary patterns found among ballads. But such structures, for the most part, involve refrains of one kind or another. We shall observe a number of these in the later study of the refrain, and consequently it seems advisable, in the interest of economy, to exclude them from discussion here, although of course they form a part of the general subject of stanza structure.

The exemplars of the unusual, reviewed above, are not very numerous, it will doubtless be noticed. Our collections can show a great many other forms of the narrative stanza, in addition to those I have presented, but the differential factors, as a rule, are so slight that the group of texts remaining is hardly significant to the general morphology of the stanza. No doubt oral tradition holds, and has held, stanza patterns different from any ever recorded on paper, but what records we do have combine to suggest that these unknown varieties, if they

exist or have existed, are not now, and have never been, very numerous or important.

The stanzas we have studied or observed in the last four chapters, though they exhibit marked differences of pattern, play a small part in creating the rich and ornamental variety which balladry affords -- that grows out of the diversified combination of the stock stanza types with an infinitely varied array of refrain elements. The narrative stanzas shown above are the bone and marrow of ballad text-structure, but by no means the whole of it. The total picture, in its manifold intricacy of detail, can only be understood by a panoramic comprehension of the rôle of the ballad refrain. The present treatise can obviously present no exhaustive exposition of its material, but it can attempt to sketch in the salient lines of the picture, and the place occupied therein by the refrain is our next critical objective.

## SUMMARY OF STANZA TYPES

The conclusion of our inspection of the ballad stanza is that, except for a small but highly important number involving different kinds of refrains, ballad stanzas belong partly or wholly to one of the following fairly definite metrical patterns:

1. CM narrative stanza (4.3.4.3. or 7.7.)
2. CM with alternating refrain (4.3.4.3.)
3. CM with end refrain (4.3.4.3. or 7.7. plus refrain)
4. LM narrative stanza (4.4.4.4.)
5. LM with alternating refrain (4.4.4.4.)
6. LM with end refrain (4.4.4.4. plus refrain)
7. Four-stress couplet (4.4.)
8. Seven-stress quatrain (7.7.7.7.)
9. Three-stress quatrain (3.3.3.3.)
10. Short Meter (3.3.4.3.)
11. Six-stress couplet (6.6.)
12. Various combinations of the above.

## Chapter Eight REFRAINS

The refrain has always been reckoned an important matter in ballad criticism. Much speculation has concerned itself with the refrain in its possible historical connections with the singing and dancing customs of the folk. It has, in fact, often been used as evidence in the attempted solution of quite important scholarly problems. But with these general and historical questions we have nothing to do here. Our objective is the discovery and description of the form of the refrain as tradition, somehow or other, has carried it, through many generations, to the ears of the ballad collectors. Observations upon all of the various refrain patterns in existence among recorded ballads will be impossible in this chapter, for the number of varieties is too great to permit such inclusion. It will, however, be practicable, and worth our while in this study, to make careful critical note of the most important and characteristic forms of refrain to be found in the ballad collections.

It has been possible and advantageous on several earlier occasions to give passing notice to matters of refrain, and it will doubtless contribute to the clarity of the present discussion if these earlier discoveries are, at this juncture, set down briefly and together. In the discussion of melody it was noted that refrains are often musically associated with simple four-phrase tunes, but that often, on the other hand, they are fitted with music of a different, and occasionally of a quite special, sort. It appeared, too, that the music set to refrains is more variegated, on the whole, than that ordinarily associated with narrative stanzas proper, but otherwise is in no sense typically distinguishable. It was observed that refrains constitute the chief factor in the variety of melodic and stanzaic patterns to be found in folk-song. We noticed that refrain lines alternating with narrative lines are less common (though reputedly more so) among ballads now being collected than are refrains coming at the end of the stanza. Finally, the tentative principle was laid down that any verse or verses unnecessary to the narrative of the ballad, and added by way of ornament, or in keeping with the musical accompaniment, should be regarded as elements of refrain.

### WHAT THE REFRAIN IS

The above preliminary definition of the ballad refrain needs, in the final analysis, strong qualification, for it implies that refrains are never connected with the development of the ballad narrative. In point of fact, they usually are not; but numerous and important exceptions demolish the statement as a true generalization. Yet the principle is of value, facilitating as it does a useful discrimination; for it is true that all elements of stanzas which do not contribute to the narrative and are repeated from stanza to stanza in their ballads should be regarded as refrains, and cannot logically be conceived as anything else.

The problem of defining the refrain has always offered trouble. To begin with, no merely structural definition is even

remotely possible in terms of stanza or verse form. A hasty glance through any folk-song repository will make that clear enough. Any conceivable definition would have to be of a quite general sort. I am convinced, however, after a number of trials in this direction, that it is impossible to formulate any im pregnable definition of ballad refrain which at the same time would be definite enough to be critically useful. After all, the ballad is a most irregular thing, and the refrain is the most irregular formal quantity in balladry. But for the purpose of practical criticism and study, the universally applicable rule-of-thumb definition is not at all requisite, nor need we here exhaust our patience in an elaborate attempt to contrive one merely as a logical feat. Refrains, when all is said and done, are not hard to recognize, and the different forms can be clearly described without its being necessary to feel that they are all, in many important senses, just alike.

Nevertheless all ballad refrains do possess certain things in common, without which the term refrain itself would not have justified its existence. All refrains, of whatever sort, must be recurrent. That is, they must be repeated from stanza to stanza in the ballad. Sometimes they may be varied, sporadically or systematically, but they must preserve a recognizable identity or they cease to exist as refrains and become merely narrative verses. Again, the refrain, to be distinguishable, must, to some degree, serve an ornamental, or at least partly non-narrative purpose. Sometimes refrains are handsome embellishments, both in musical setting and in the text itself. At other times they add little or no beauty, and in some cases appear to be little more than devices to fill out spaces in the melody which would otherwise be empty of verbal content. But in all cases alike, it is true that they contribute values of their own to the ballads wherein they occur. Even when it happens that they assume narrative responsibilities, they are never, in function, merely narrative and nothing else.

In the ballad text alone, the refrain, though not always made up of legitimate English words, is practically always verbal. (We have some rare instances in the text collections where a whistling refrain is indicated, but music for the whistling is not usually supplied, so that, in practice, the refrains belonging to such ballads are negligible.) On the other hand, when text and tune are performed together in folk-song, the refrain contains both music and language.<sup>1</sup> An explanation must be made of the relative parts played by each of these elements.

In the normal ballad, as I have said, the refrain is sung in the same way as are the other ballad verses; but such a performance does not mean that music and text are of equal importance in forming the refrain as an element distinct from the narrative text. The distinctive character of the refrain usually grows out of its language, not out of its music. As previously noted, the refrain music usually is undistinguished by traits of its own; normally it forms part of the unified melody to which

<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally ballads have recitative refrains: cf. Child 274A.

the whole stanza is set, or if special melodic phrases are required to accommodate the refrain, these have, for the most part, no peculiar qualities which mark them as elements of refrain, but are, on the other hand, usually built up of the musical ideas found in the stanza tune proper. Exceptions to this statement can, of course, be found. Sometimes a refrain is encountered whose music is truly distinctive, and expressive of the mood inherent in the poetry to which it is mated. Sharp's extraordinary variant of Lord Randal (illustrated on page 21) shows with what striking effectiveness such a mutual adjustment is sometimes worked out.<sup>2</sup> But, in a general sense, we must conclude that the refrain of the traditional ballad, as we see it today, is primarily and often exclusively a concern of poetry, not of music. It must be described mainly in terms of its text, for therein it usually exists and is realized, even when the music plays its proper part in ballad performance.

#### REFRAIN VERSIFICATION

Refrains are related to the narrative elements of their ballads in many different ways, with regard both to structure and ideational content. It is not always easy to decide whether the refrain lines should be thought of as joining together with the narrative verses to form one single stanza, or as standing apart in an independent, or at least separate, structure. But this problem is essentially the same one dealt with several times before, i. e. the central question of how stanza form rightly should be determined. In that connection the principle was developed that versification ought to be guided by musical structure, assisted, wherever possible, by attention to the natural divisions of the language itself. The principle can be applied successfully in the resolution of verse and stanza wherever refrains are set to music, and also sometimes, by analogy, to texts alone. In determining the verse forms of refrains, however, special regard must be given to the text, since, as mentioned before, the most important earmarks of the refrain are to be found in its poetry.

Before moving on to concrete illustrations, a further generalization is in order. It may be said that refrains combining with narrative verses to form single stanzas are overwhelmingly the rule. In this class are all refrains of the alternating, or other internal, sorts. This would naturally be expected. But the class also includes the great majority of refrains which follow after their narrative elements --those of the type sometimes called burdens or choruses. Embodiment of these forms in the stanza is clearly indicated, for the most part, by the unified melodies to which the stanzas are arranged. The following tune will illustrate.

#### Get Up and Bar the Door

Barry, No. 275B, p. 320. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press

(Continued on next page)

2

For other illustrations of the same unity see Sharp, No. 3, p. 6, and Barry, No. 200D, p. 272.

It came about the Michaelmas time, And ma-ny good times were then When  
oor gude wife had puddings to make, And boiled with-in the pan, And the  
barring of the fore-door, weel, weel, weel, And the barring of the fore-door, weel!

It came about the Michaelmas time,  
And many good times were then,  
When oor gude wife had puddings to make,  
And boiled within the pan.  
And the barring of the fore-door, weel, weel, weel,  
And the barring of the fore-door, weel!

The portion of the melody set to the narrative verses is separated in no emphatic way, either cadential or metrical, from the refrain segment which follows. This is the general rule. There are, however, a relatively few ballads in which the melody is quite noticeably interrupted at the conclusion of the narrative portion by a perfect cadence, often accompanied by an important pause. Such an occurrence seems sufficient justification for a separation of the text at that point, so that the resulting text-stanza, if printed separately, might appropriately (should one prefer such an arrangement) follow the typographical plan of actual division into two parts. Such is the situation in our next example.

The Keach i' the Creel

Barry, No. 281B, p. 338. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press

This little maid went up the street, Some fresh fish for to buy; And the little town clerk he heard of it, And he  
followed her by-and-by. Titty itty al tol, li ro li-do, titty itty al tol li-ro lee

This little maid went up the street,  
Some fresh fish for to buy,  
And the little town-clerk he heard of it,  
And he followed her by-and-by.



Titty itty ol tol, liro lido,  
Titty itty ol tol liro lee.

Between the above two examples, I have drawn a dividing line based only upon cadential justification. In practice, when the total expression of the music is taken into account, such a procedure will at times seem a bit arbitrary, or uncalled for, since sometimes the perfect cadence does not furnish a very effectual interruption between the phrases which precede and follow it. Then too, the language of the refrain itself normally furnishes emphatic evidence of its individual identity. It seems sensible, therefore, to disregard hair-splitting cadential distinctions altogether, and represent all refrains of all sorts, when printed without music, as parts of single stanzas.

I have used the words chorus and burden in a loose fashion above to denote refrains of the sort which follow the narrative element. It will be better in the future to avoid these terms in discussing ballad refrains, for each of them carries associations which, in the present criticism, are apt to be somewhat misleading. It will apparently be best to use the term end refrain to denote all refrain elements which are placed after the narrative, as opposed to being intermingled with it, or internal to its structure. Different forms of end refrain can easily be indicated and described in terms of their connection with the narrative and their various patterns of verse.

#### ALTERNATING REFRAINS

The essential difference between alternating and end refrains has already been pointed out in several earlier connections (e.g. see p. 80). It will be further clarified in the discussion to follow.

The alternating refrain is only one form of the general type whose lines are intermingled among the purely narrative verses, and which are generally known as internal refrains. Among these it is by far the most common and important pattern. It is characterized and distinguished (barring the usual slight exceptions) by several definite peculiarities of structure:

(1) The refrain forms part of a quatrain stanza, practically always a stanza in CM or LM, both metrical patterns being about equally represented.

(2) The refrain element consists of two single and separate lines of verse.

(3) The refrain lines alternate, in a strict pattern, with the narrative verses. Specifically, the first and third lines of the quatrain are narrative verses, while the second and fourth lines form the refrain. No case has come to my notice, nor is there probably any on record, where the reverse of this arrangement prevails. In fact, from the standpoint of an expressive art, such a possibility is not easily imaginable. The refrain is by its nature an echo or repetition of some form or idea already laid down in advance of it.

The above structural principle may be seen in the following stanzas of the ballad Edward (Child 13A):

'What bluid's that on thy coat lap,  
Son Davie, son Davie?  
 What bluid's that on thy coat lap?  
And the truth come tell to me.'

'It is the bluid of my great hawk,  
Mother lady, mother lady:  
 It is the bluid of my great hawk,  
And the truth I have told to thee.'

These stanzas show alternating refrain in the CM form. The refrain lines, it will be noticed, are not in this ballad entirely divorced from the narrative structure. Rather, they are pretty closely connected with it, so much so that only their regular repetition, in a recognizable state of preservation throughout the text, marks them off as anything different from ordinary narrative verses. Here the theoretical line between refrain and non-refrain is very thin, but it is real.

Another fact comes to light. This representative text shows that in stanzas having this type of refrain there is a tendency to treat as recurrent elements not the refrain lines alone, but the narrative verses also. In most of the stanzas of this text, the first and third verses are identical. In other stanzas where this is not true, these verses are linked together by rhyme. (In the regular CM narrative stanza only the second and fourth verses rhyme.) Stanza 10 will illustrate the latter variation.

'What wilt thou leave to thy poor wife,  
Son Davie, son Davie?  
 'Grief and sorrow all her life,  
And she'll never see mair o me.'

Along with the rhymes in the narrative verses, this stanza shows, in comparison with those quoted above it, another change in the final line of refrain. Here and elsewhere all through the ballad, such changes correspond to the changing situations and eventualities of the story which they assist in recounting. As to the narrative verses, identical repetition is exceptional, rather than usual, in the type. Commonly these verses simply rhyme together, as they do above. Exactly the same thing is true normally of the refrain lines themselves; exact repetition is not as common as connection by rhyme or assonance. Most typical, perhaps, is the stanza in which each of the four lines belongs to the alternating rhyme scheme:<sup>3</sup>

'But will ye go to yon greenwood side?'  
Aye as the gowans grow gay

## 3

Mention should be made here of ballads some of whose stanzas contain alternating refrains while others are wholly narrative. An interesting example of such part-time refrains can be seen in Child 127. See also Campbell and Sharp, No. 9B, p. 29-30.

'If ye canna gang, I will cause you to ride.'  
The first morning in May.

In this stanza (from Child 4A) no precise connection exists between the refrain and the onward progress of the narrative. It is completely separated, in sense, from the story. In ballads containing refrains of the alternating type, this situation is the rule, and relative to it, the ballad Edward must be regarded as unusual. The refrains in many of these texts are built up of real English words, and when they are, as the above models show, they may contribute to the narrative, or else at least contain some decorative or lyrical idea vaguely relevant to the conception of the story. Many of them, however, verge toward mere nonsense, and in stanzas where nonsense syllables are actually used, the ideas in the refrain lines become themselves nonsense, and often very little else. But as such they do not make nonsense of their ballads. Sometimes the mood communicated by such lines amounts to an advantageous contribution to the expression of the song. This is true in Campbell and Sharp's variant of The Farmer's Curs'd Wife. (No. 34B, p. 140. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

There was an old man lived under the hill,  
Sing ti-ro rattle-ing day,  
 If he ain't moved away, he's living there still,  
Sing ti-ro rattle-ing day.

Whether such verses spring, as a rule, from the desire to express the mood of the whimsical and humorous, or from poverty of poetic invention makes no difference in the finished product. The story in this ballad, and the manner of its telling, from first to last, suggest strongly that, in this particular instance at least, the former is the most likely explanation. A clear idea of this point can be gained, however, only by reading the entire ballad.

It is interesting to read, beside the Virginia variant of The Farmer's Curs'd Wife above, Child's English variant of The Twa Sisters. It too contains a nonsense refrain, but the ballad story, at the same time, is full of sorrow and tragedy. The second stanza reads as follows: (Child, 10A)

And when they came unto the sea-brym,  
With a hie downe downe a downe-a,  
 The elder did push the younger in.  
With a hy downe downe a downe-a.

Such a refrain, as read in the text, is hardly in keeping with the feeling of pathos elicited by the sorrowful tale itself. Yet it is probable that the musical character of the song, in traditional reality, has succeeded in more than overbalancing the flippant or casual tone of the refrain text, and in establishing a sympathetic emotional response to the tragedy of the ill-fated sister. At least this is what happens in the fairly

numerous musical variants of the ballad now available for study. The song, in America, is usually set to the elaborate pattern shown on page 18, and it is prevailingly sung in the major scale, as opposed to some of the modes more melancholy in their expressive character; but withal, the tone is always prevailingly serious and tragic. Songs like this one form exceptions to my earlier general statement, for in them the music of the refrain actually does play an important rôle in establishing the effect, though it does so by means of opposition to the influence of its own text. At any rate, ballads of this kind show that the text refrain, apart from its music, is by no means always an instrument through which the mood of the ballad story expresses itself. Many times the refrain text is indifferent to the real mood, or at odds with it. The situation illustrates again the difficulty, and perhaps the impossibility, of forming a correct conception of any ballad without taking its music into serious account.

The examples of alternating refrain just reviewed are sufficient, I think, to illustrate its characteristic structure and some of the various ways in which it is related to the narrative element of its stanza. All but the last one of these examples happen to be in the CM form, but the varieties we have witnessed are typical of the alternating refrain in a general way, and can be found just as well in the LM stanza. It would be useless here to repeat examples. I shall cite only two stanzas in the latter form, the first one showing the final line of refrain contributory to the narrative, the second containing refrains which, though made in the English language, are in no sense germane to the ballad fable, being merely rhetorical and ornamental. (Courtesy Yale Univ. Press)

(Barry, p. 10) As I was a-walking up Strawberry Lane --  
Every rose grows merry and fine, --  
 I chanced for to meet a pretty, fair maid,  
Who wanted to be a true-lover of mine.

(Barry, p. 323) As Jinny came in from jogging his plow,  
Jinny come gentle, Rose Marie!  
 He says, 'Dear wife, is my dinner done now?'  
As the dew flies over the green valley!

The reader will notice that in sketching the various sorts and kinds of alternating refrain, I have made no attempt to fix these varieties into real types. The features illustrated overlap and combine with one another in too many ways to permit an intelligible or useful further classification. What I have described has been only what is most salient and noteworthy.

One curious form of alternating refrain remains to be mentioned -- the addition of the syllable O (sometimes Ah or some other exclamation is used instead) to the second and fourth verses of the narrative stanza. This quite common refrain element has already been commented on in another connection (see p. 85). Strictly speaking, it is not a true alternating re-

frain if we adhere to a rigid definition of the type in terms of the models already displayed. But its regularity of alternation in its stanza nevertheless associates it more closely with this general type than with any other type later to be studied. Consequently I shall include a specimen of it here. The stanza, as shown below, is sometimes followed by an additional end refrain, as in Barry, No. 275A. (The circumstance shows one instance of the practical difficulties in the road of any simple classification of refrain types.) (Child, 58B)

The King he sits in Dumferling,  
Drinking the blude reid wine: O  
 'O where will I get gude sailor,  
That'll sail the ships o mine? O.

To conclude our survey of alternating refrains, it might be added that, although other sorts of internal refrains exist among ballads, none except those just studied are actually alternating if the real meaning of the word is respected.

#### END REFRAINS INVOLVING REPEATED NARRATIVE VERSES

End refrains formed by repetition of narrative verses constitute a class of their own in balladry, and a familiar and important one. The first example will show such a refrain formed by simple repetition of the fourth short line of narrative verse.

#### Edward

Campbell and Sharp, No. 7B, p. 27. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

O what will you say when your fa-ther comes back, O

what will you say to me? I'll set my foot on yonder little boat, I'll

sail a-way o-ver the sea, — I'll sail a-way o-ver the sea

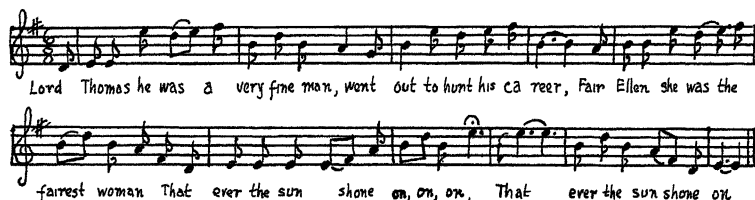
It should be noted that the repetition of the short verse is exactly paralleled by the repetition of the short musical phrase to which it is mated. Refrains of this sort are peculiar in that they are not carried along from stanza to stanza in identical form, but differ in every separate stanza according to the corresponding changes of language in the narrative verses.<sup>4</sup> They are constant only in their musical form. The

<sup>4</sup> Carried to fine distinctions, it is a question whether this fact ought not debar such repetitious elements from being classified as refrains. But

comparative study of folk-song and text collections indicates unmistakably that, in the latter, repeated lines of this sort have sometimes been eliminated as unnecessary to the ballad story and stanza pattern. But in their musical settings they are clearly important elements of an organized whole. In folk-song, at least, they are genuine refrains and cannot be disposed of as negligible redundancies.

Repetition and parallelism of verse and music are not usually so precise as they happen to be in the exemplar printed above. The following is, perhaps, more typical.

Sweet William and Fair Annie  
Greig, No. XXVIII, p. 57.



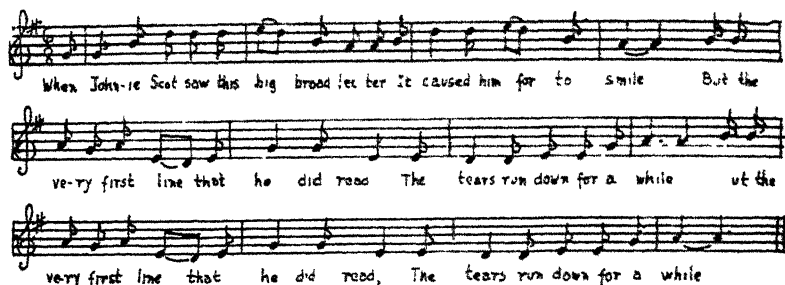
In this one the repeated musical phrase has undergone radical alterations, though it is plainly repetitious in idea. The characteristic repetition of the final word in the fourth verse has been mentioned previously on page 17. Often two or three of the final words are repeated, or some other more or less appropriate expression (such as "my dear") may be interpolated. The explanation of these transitional words is suggested by the singing of the ballad. They evidently represent an attempt to offset the sense of finality which would accompany a prolonged note set to a single prolonged word or syllable. The added musical and verbal syllables, in other words, are literal stop-gaps felt to be necessary in sustaining the effect of melodic continuity. As such they contribute noticeably to the unity of the musical sentence. But even in the tunes where they are not present, the music is always quite closely knit, and the stanza set to it an obviously united and solid structure.

More prevalent than the refrains just exhibited are those, similar in conception, which are formed by the repetition of the long narrative verse. These involve the same parallelism in musical accompaniment, but the transitional syllables are not usually to be found, probably because, relative to the longer tune, the prolonged notes at the cadences produce a less emphatic interruption of the general onward movement.

Johnie Scot

Campbell and Sharp, No. 25, p. 109. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons  
(Continued on next page)

such lines are not ordinary narrative verses, and are so refrain-like in essential particulars that it seems best, for practical purposes, to include them in the category.

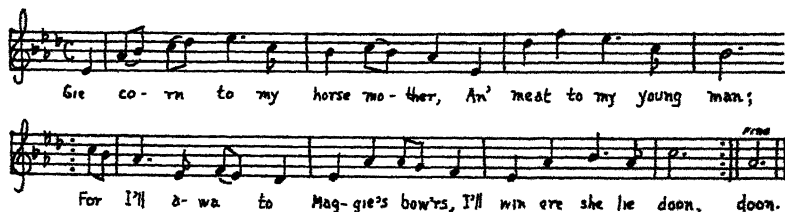


It will be seen by the concluding cadence that this is a circular tune. I hasten to add that circular tunes are not characteristically associated with refrains of this kind. I have cited this melody partly because it shows how clearly the traditional singers must have been aware of an organized unity in stanzas belonging to the type. The same thing is well illustrated in a different way by the second stanza of the ballad, which curiously aberrates from the established pattern, and is composed of six un-repeated narrative lines.

A very interesting transition from narrative proper to refrain can be seen in the next tune. The element in question is entirely separate from the text. The effect of conclusiveness at the close of the second long phrase is deliberately and handsomely avoided by the device of elevating the pitch to the third note in the scale above the tonic.

Clyde's Water

Greig, No. LXVII (1a) p. 149.



The instance furnishes an added example of a folk-song united in structure by methods which, from the evidence of the text alone, would never be suspected to exist.

The end refrains just studied have been built up by the repetition of verses amounting quantitatively to either a quarter or a half of the narrative stanza proper.<sup>5</sup> One might, perhaps,

<sup>5</sup>

There is a noteworthy significance in the ease and frequency with which singers use as refrains the repeated lines of narrative stanzas. The habit shows how little consciousness exists in the traditional mind of any real distinction between narrative and refrain stanzas as separate types. We have seen how both forms are sometimes used interchangeably within a single

expect to find a continuation of the scale and to encounter some refrains formed by repetition of the whole stanza. But this apparently does not exist in balladry, although approaches to it are not uncommon. For example, sometimes the entire melody is repeated in the refrain, but furnished with its own set of words. Again, some text stanzas contain elements of refrain in every line, which are regularly repeated, though interfused with progressive narrative material. The former sort we shall presently inspect. The latter, not being end refrains, will be considered somewhat later in the chapter.

#### END REFRAINS NOT INVOLVING REPEATED NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

The end refrains so far noted have been constructed of material present in the narrative portion proper. But very common, also, among ballads are end refrains which possess separate texts of their own. These usually do not vary from stanza to stanza, but remain in a fixed form throughout the whole ballad. Generally, though not always, they follow narrative stanzas of the ubiquitous CM and LM patterns. In the number of their lines they show considerably more variety than can be found in the type just reviewed above.

Starting with the shorter forms, we find a few of these refrains consisting of only a single short line, though, curiously enough, these are rather scarce in the folk-song collections. They are somewhat more plentiful in Child,<sup>6</sup> where some of them doubtless represent fragments of refrains originally longer in extent, but even here they are not at all common.

#### The Dishonest Miller

Cox, No. 155 (A,B) p. 531. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

There was an old man and he lived all a-lone, And he had with him his  
three sons grown; Now when he came to make his will, He  
had nothing left but a lit-tle old mill. Thi tra la la diddle dumpty dee

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the verse. The second staff contains the melody for the second line. The third staff contains the melody for the third line, which ends with a double bar line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Varieties of this scheme may be studied in Campbell and Sharp, No. 42, p. 163; Sharp, No. 3, p. 6; Cox, No. 6A, p. 522; Barry, No. 275A, p. 318 and No. 279, p. 333. The latter example from Cox shows the stanza proper in couplet form. The specimens ballad. The fact aids in substantiating Professor Gerould's conclusion that the ballad, as we have it, is a single narrative type, and cannot be conceived as separable into two classes of lyric narrative, that with refrain, and that without refrain. (See The Ballad of Tradition, p. 120 ff.)

Gf. among others 110A, 115, 152, 163A, 164, 187B, 207A.



from Barry involve elements of internal refrain as well as the short line at the end.

More prevalent than these, however, are the end refrains consisting of two short verses.

The Rich Old Lady

Campbell and Sharp, No. 45, p. 168. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

There was a rich old la- dy In Lon-don she did dwell, She  
 loved her own man dear- ly, But an o- ther man twice as well  
 Sing to the I- re- O Sing to the I- re- O. 7

Fairly numerous, also, are the refrains of four short lines. These, in their text form, appear very much like separate stanzas, and are sometimes represented in that way. Child, for example, prints his No. 178A (and others of the same kind) in this fashion:

It befell at Martynmas,  
 When wether waxed colde,  
 Captaine Care said to his men,  
 We must go take a holde.

Syck, sike, and to-towe sike,  
 And sike and like to die;  
 The sikest nighte that euer I abode,  
 God lord haue mercy on me!

The following two models will show how the melodic elements of these refrains vary in the intimacy of their connection with the melody accompanying the narrative portion.

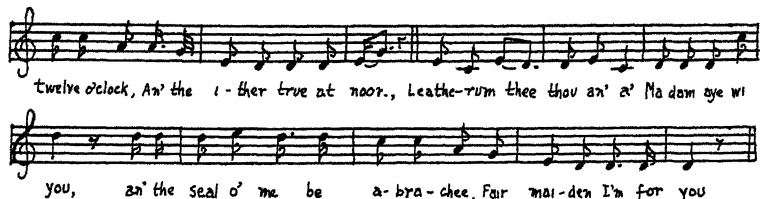
The Broomfield Hill

Greig, No. XVII, p. 32.

There was a knicht an' a la- dy bricht, Set trysts a-mong the broom, The are to come at

7

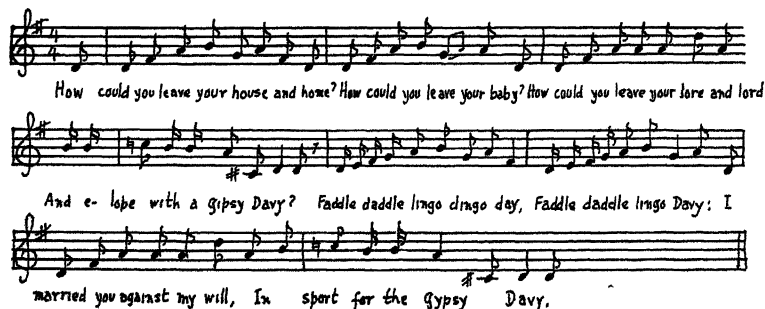
For further study of the type see Child, 112A, 132, 192A, 274A, 288A; Campbell and Sharp, 4A, 8A, 27A, 55A; Barry, pp. 42, 338, 365; Greig, 12, 50A, 56. In some of these refrains the music and text would perhaps indicate a reading in terms of a single long line rather than in two short lines, though the latter is clearly the rule among the specimens listed.



Compared with this rather closely woven melody (phrased A,B, A,B) the next tune exhibits greater distinctness between narrative and refrain segments. The effect of separation depends not only on cadence, but also upon the general musical character of the refrain.

#### Gipsy Davy

Barry, No. 200D, p. 272. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press



In comparing these melodies it is noteworthy that the refrain music, in both, is not distinct in its fundamental conception, but based (albeit with much variation) upon the ideas laid down in the opening phrases. To generalize, no matter how distinct from the narrative the refrain text may be in sense or idea, its music is always cut of the same cloth as that used in the narrative segment. The fact seems contingent upon the natural laws of musical expression and intelligibility, and implies a fundamental unity in the total effect of any folk-song, regardless of how nonsensical the text of the refrain may be, or how irrelevant in idea to the thoughts expressed in the accompanying narrative. Such a feeling of basic oneness in the whole stanza, induced by musical articulation, is largely lost in some ballads when the text is recited without benefit of melody.

#### OTHER FORMS OF REFRAIN

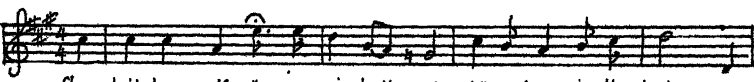
I have previously mentioned the difficulties of classifying refrains. I am not without misgivings that the groups discussed above are misleading in seeming to imply that refrains classed

in one way are always exclusive in relation to those grouped in some other way. Of course this is not true. The types shown are real enough, for a considerable number of ballads can be found possessing in common the differential features which have been used to define them. But aside from that, many ballads combine various traits which have been definitely assigned to particular groups. There would be no use in trying to dispose of such specimens categorically. Nor is there any chance to present a comprehensive exhibition of their diversities of structure without entailing a too exhaustive display of trivial variations. I shall therefore aim, in this concluding section, to present only a limited number of models not belonging to any of the types already discussed. Collectively they will suggest the range of rhythmic pattern to be found among stanzas where refrains are involved, and make clearer my earlier statement that ballads, by and large, owe to the refrains much of the versatility which those who enjoy folk-songs relish in hearing or reading them.

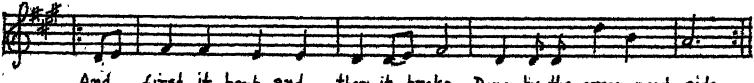
The natural interest and appeal of the unusual has, of course, been a guiding principle in the selection of the folk-songs contained in Sharp's volume One Hundred English Folk-Songs. That book is a most interesting museum of rare and beautiful exceptions to characteristic tendency in English folk-tradition, and as such it has a scientific value in the study of traditional songs which its discerning author, perhaps, did not count among its merits. To this collection I am indebted for many of the ensuing illustrations, though the usual folk-song books, containing presumably a traditional cross-section, themselves show a good many extraordinary models.

Campbell and Sharp, No. 9A, p. 29, shows an alternating refrain complicated by repetition of the second long line. (Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

#### The Cruel Mother



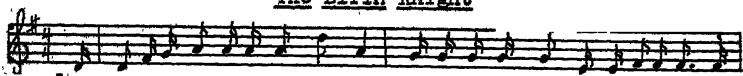
She laid her- self all a- gainst the oak, All a- long in the Lude- ney



And first it bent and then it broke, Down by the green- wood side.

Barry, No. 2A, p. 3, shows a regular alternating pattern with an inserted refrain line preceding the final verse. (Courtesy Yale Univ. Press)

#### The Elfin Knight

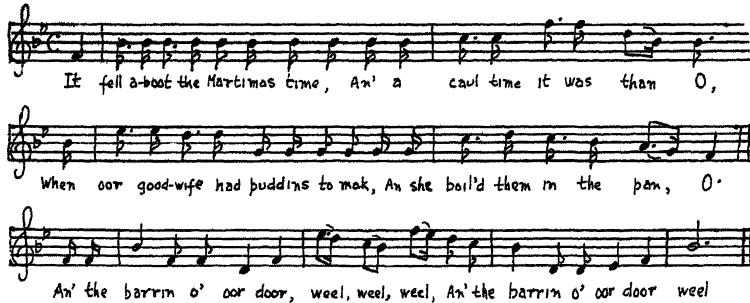


I want you to make me a cambric shirt; Furb a loun a link, sup a lee my nee: With

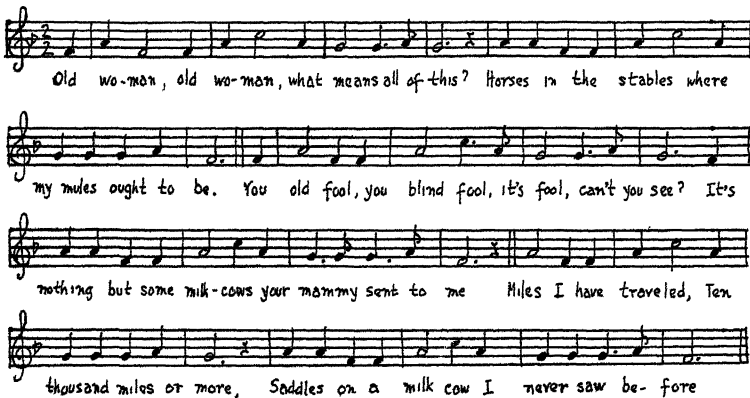


Greig, No. XCIIa, p. 218, exhibits an alternating O-refrain and an end refrain as well.

Get Up and Bar the Door



Our Goodman, Campbell and Sharp, No. 32A, p. 134, is a curiously complex affair. Exclusive of its special first stanza, it has refrain elements in every one of its six stanza lines, and the lines, in the music, are arranged in a triad of couplets, the tune being repeated three times. The unity of the six-line stanza, however, makes it natural to conceive of the recurrent musical elements as component parts of a single six-phrase melody. (Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)



From Campbell and Sharp comes a curious example of refrain

elements in both of two narrative verses, and an end refrain to boot. I have italicized the refrains, since otherwise they could not readily be distinguished without reference to the other stanzas of the text. (No. 1A, p.1. Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons)

*(first stanza only)*

The knight met a *child in the road* *Warte ste you*  
 go-ing to? *said the knight in the road* *I'm a going*  
 to my school, *said the child as he stood* *He stood and he stood and it's*  
*well because he stood* *I'm a-going* *to my school, said the child as he stood.*

Another instance of such interfusion can be seen in Sharp's Lord Rendal, appearing on page 21 above.

The following ballad has only one line of narrative in its quatrain stanza, the other three all being refrains. (Campbell and Sharp, No. 34A, p. 139. Courtesy G.P.Putnam's Sons)

#### The Farmer's Curst Wife

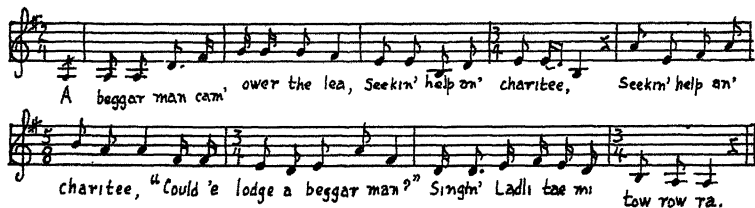
There was an old man who fol-lowed the plough, Sing hal-l-for band if I do, Sing  
 bands and rebels, and rebels and troubles, Sing new, new ..

From the same collection is the following instance of a two-line narrative element combined with a single verse of refrain. (No. 35A, p. 142. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons)

#### The Golden Vanity

There was a little ship in the South Amerikee That went by the name of the  
 Weeping Willow Tree, As she sailed up-on the low-de lands deep

Barry's The Gaberlunzie Man shows a repeated second line inside the stanza, and a nonsense verse of refrain at the end. The complete interiority of the repetition is very remarkable. In some stanzas of the text, the scheme is varied, the third line not being a repetition of the second in these cases, but a genuine narrative line linked to it by rhyme. (No. 279, p. 333. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press)



The above collection of examples, I think, will conclusively show that internal and external refrains are often and variously mingled together. The resultant futility of attempting to separate all ballad refrains into those distinct groups need not be pointed out.

Familiar to readers of The Twa Sisters is the elaborate eight-line pattern whose music has been illustrated on page 18. The text of this interesting stanza deserves further attention. On several occasions already I have noted and lamented the tendency among earlier text collectors to allow their ballad refrains, wholly or in part, to slip through their fingers. The omission or abbreviation of refrains is understandable and justifiable in the case of an early manuscript writer whose reader was expected to know the refrain, or to know at least how to arrange one to a familiar melody. But it does not follow from this practice, nor is it true that, even in the text alone, as recited without music, refrains are generally negligible portions of the stanza. On the contrary, they often add peculiar values to it. It is surely superfluous to contend that the following text stanza from Child has a fine, bold swing and a neatly contrived rhythmic balance which are secured for it by the refrain elements embodied in it. Stripped of the refrain, the narrative alone would become a simple four-stress couplet, a thoroughly good verse form, too, no doubt, but lacking the distinctive quality of its genuine original. In representing this stanza I have not followed Child's versification altogether. The analogy of variant song-stanzas indicates an eight-line pattern as preferable, though, in the final result, it really makes little difference which arrangement is used. The metrical formula may be set down as 4.4.4.3.4.4.3.3. Observation of the rests is of great importance in the reading of this pattern.<sup>8</sup>

8

For other examples of this pattern see Child, 21 and 26; Campbell and Sharp, 4B, 33A, 33B; Cox, 3, 162; Davis, 5A, 5B, 8A, 8B, 45D, 45J. Some of these show slight variations in versification. Sometimes the refrain is extended to include nine lines in the stanza. At other times the pattern is shortened, though in all the examples listed the same fundamental structure

(Child 108)

The Two Sisters

3/8	(4)	There   was   twa   sisters   in a   bowr.	(4)
	(4)	Edin-   burgh   Edin-   burgh	(4)
	(4)	There   was   twa   sisters   in a   bowr.	(4)
	(3)	Starling   for   ay   x	(4)
	(4)	There   was   twa   sisters   in a   bowr.	(4)
	(4)	There   cam a   knight   to   be   their   wooer.	(4)
	(3)	Bonny   Saint   John-   ston	(4)
	(3)	Stands u-   pon   Tay.	(4)

In spite of the above stanza and many others of equal quality, however, it must be admitted that refrains do not always enhance the poetic beauty of the texts wherein they appear. Occasionally stanzas with elaborate refrains have no rhythmic excellence to boast of, and at the same time certain meaningless refrain-words may be repeated so often throughout the verses as to become tiresome. (A case in point, I think, is Child's The Three Ravens, 26.) It must be remembered, after all, that refrains were made to be sung. A narrative verse bereft of its music is, even at its poetic worst, still a sensible form of language. It is not, in practice, often depressed below that almost irreducible esthetic minimum. But a refrain verse which happens to be lacking in ideational substance and has, at the same time, no very high quality of rhythm in its sound alone, is apt to be left artistically rather high and dry in the absence of its melody. Only in their musical form do refrains appear at their artistic best, and often, in other circumstances, they make a very indifferent showing indeed. Sharp has noticed a similar situation with respect to ballad melody. "The most perfect type of ballad," he writes, "is that in which the tune, whilst serving its purpose as an ideal vehicle for the words, is of comparatively little value when divorced from its text."<sup>9</sup> (Sharp proceeds to cite The False Knight upon the Road<sup>10</sup> as "a splendid example of the genuine ballad at its highest pitch.")<sup>11</sup> No matter how we may personally estimate the quality of the ballad cited, or the quality of others like it, it is always a fact that such folk-songs are decidedly something more than the can be witnessed. There are, by the way, other refrain stanzas similar to this which I have not mentioned in the discussion. See, for example, Campbell and Sharp, No. 28, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> G. J. Sharp, Engl. Folk-Songs from the S. Appal., Int., p. xii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., No. 1A, p. 1. See p. 116 above.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. xii.

sum of their parts, when we mean by parts the music and the poetry taken separately.

A curious problem is presented by a score or more of the ballads in Child's Robin Hood group the second line of whose stanzas is a refrain, usually in the form "With a hey down down and a down" or some variation of that pattern. Having never seen a folk-song, music and all, where such a refrain occurred within the narrative lines of the stanza and nowhere else, I have my doubts whether Child's versions showing this peculiarity have preserved their original form. The doubtful arrangement can be seen in No. 125:

When Robin Hood was about twenty years old,  
With a hey down down and a down  
 He happened to meet Little John,  
 A jolly brisk blade, right fit for the trade,  
 For he was a lusty young man.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the other Robin Hood ballads in Child which follow this form as far as it goes, but include an end refrain as well, may help to explain what the above specimens were formerly like. Such a one is No. 120B:

When Robin Hood and Little John  
Down a down a down a down  
 Went oer yon bank of broom,  
 Said Robin Hood bold to Little John,  
 We have shot for many a pound.  
Hey, etc.<sup>13</sup>

For a stanza like this one some rough analogies can be found among the folk-songs, as for example Campbell and Sharp, No. 8B. The second line of this stanza type (as both examples above show) is interpolated in a very peculiar fashion, so that it seems probable that all of the ballads which have it, whether end refrains are indicated or not, once belonged to a structurally similar group of considerable size. Child's headnote to No. 125 mentions that it and Nos. 143, 133, 126, 122, 146, 142B, and 131 were "directed to be sung to one and the same tune." No doubt the "same tune" -- whatever it was -- would likewise fit all of the other stanzas having the same peculiar structure. Thus it seems likely that this considerable group of ballads were all sung to some very well known air which would deserve the name of "the Robin Hood tune" if, indeed, it did not actually enjoy some such title.

Among all the folk-song repositories and collections of "old English songs" wherein I have endeavored to find this stanza type actually set to its music, I have discovered but one in-

<sup>12</sup>

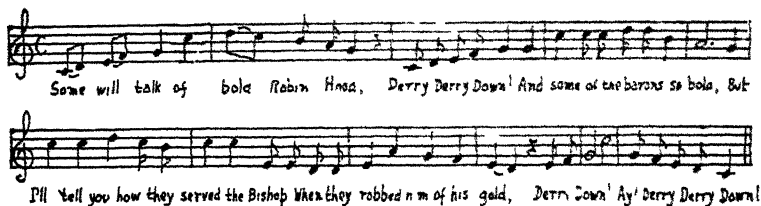
The type may also be found among the A and B versions of Child Nos. 122, 126, 128, 130, 131, 133, 142, 143, 146, 150.

<sup>13</sup>

See also Child Nos. 135, 136, 139, 141, 147, 153.



stance of it: Robin Hood and the Bishop of Hereford, J.F.S.S., Vol. III, p. 61. This tune, in all respects, bears out the inferences laid down above. The melody has evidently come perilously close to not surviving at all in a recorded state, and this fact itself argues in favor, rather than against, its earlier general circulation. The recorded ballad, it will be seen, has the end refrain, and very likely all of the other Robin Hood texts belonging to its type likewise had it.



The above exemplar of the hypothetical Robin Hood tune certainly must represent its species in all important metrical features of pattern, though we are safe in assuming that the other variants must have been (or in oral tradition may still be) quite variegated in regard to their respective melodic shapes.

The following refrain forms will further demonstrate the flair for variety and lyric beauty characteristic of this phase of English folk-song. Noteworthy and handsomely contrived in the first illustration is the abrupt shift of the rhythmic movement in the 2/4-measure near the conclusion.

#### The Golden Vanity

Sharp, No. 14, p. 36. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



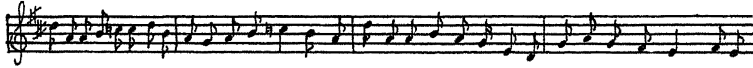
The next ballad has a quatrain stanza of sevens and an end refrain in couplet. Of special interest here is the distinct character of the refrain text in conjunction with the smooth-flowing continuity of both elements in the melody. The repetition of the refrain line with its musical phrase seems necessary to balance the long phrases of the narrative sector, bringing about a final sense of rhythmic equilibrium.

The Green Wedding

Sharp, No. 16, p. 40. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



There was a squire lived in the East, a squire of high degree, who went courting of a country girl, a comely maid was she, But



when her father heard of it an angry man was he, He re-quested of his daughter dear to shun his company. To my



rally, dally, dido, Rally, dally, day, To my rally, dally, dido, rally, dally, day

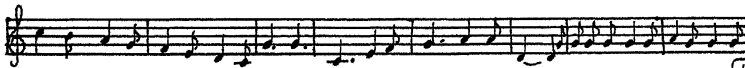
The next song is quite extraordinary in the elaboration of its development, and especially in the fact that its refrain is considerably longer than its strictly narrative part. In spite of its complexity, the musical ideas in the tune are few and simple.

The Two Magicians

Sharp, No. 20, p. 48. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



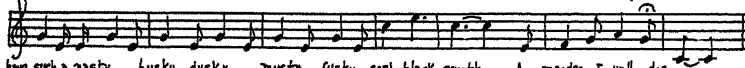
O She look'd out of the win-dow as white as any milk But He look'd into the window as black as any silk Hul-



lea, hullea, hul- lea, hullea, you coal black smith! you have done me no harm-You never shall change my maiden name <sup>that</sup>

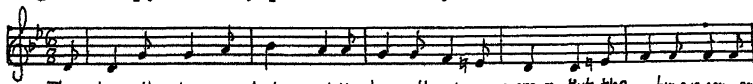


I have kept so long; I'd rather die a maid. Yes, but then she said, And be buried all in my grave than I'd

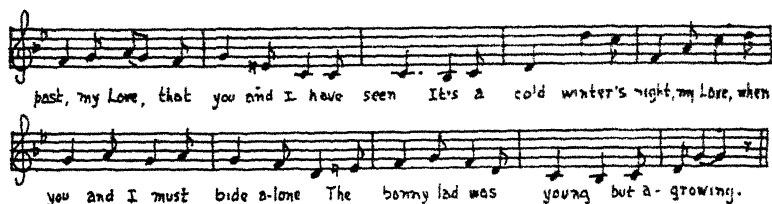


have such a nasty husky, dusky, musty, fussy, coal-black smith - A maiden I will die

The Trees They Do Grow High shows three long verses of narrative, not usually rhymed but often linked by assonance, and followed by a short line of refrain, which itself is varied and involved with the sense of the text. In the bond between text-idea and musical expression, in the restraint and suggestive power of the poetry, and in the rhythm of the verse, we have here what to me appears to be a finely achieved model of folk-song. (Sharp, No. 25, p. 58. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)



The trees they do grow high, and the leaves they do grow green, But the time is gone and



The verse form of this ballad deserves special notice.

3/8

- (6) The | trees they | do grow | high | and the | leaves they | do grow | green | (8)  
 (7) But | the | time is | gone and | past, my | love, that | you and | I have | seen. | (8)  
 (8) It's a | cold | winter's | night, my | love, when | you and | I must | bide alone. | (8)  
 (5) The | bonny | lad was | young but a- | growing. | x7 | x7 | x7 | (8)

It is a very remarkable stanza. The first three lines contain respectively six, seven, and eight heard stresses in a cumulative progression, and the final refrain line is powerfully accentuated in effect by its contrasting brevity. Very seldom indeed can be found in balladry a verse line of eight measures completely full of syllables. This occurs in the third verse of the stanza above, taking into account the anacrustic syllable of the final line. Its effect is very extraordinary. I should add that this structure is characteristic of all the stanzas in the ballad. We have here an instance of a ballad which, either as song or poem, has in it the power of genuine beauty.

As a final study in refrains I have taken not a ballad but a lyric folk-song. It will serve to illustrate how fundamentally ballad and lyric are the same thing in all aspects of their mechanical structure. By and large there is no real difference between the two classes of songs except in the matter of whether or not a story is told in the poetry. There is one reservation to that generalization, i. e. that the lyric songs tend to be somewhat more complex, elaborate, and ornate; but of course they are not always so. Often, too, songs which could hardly be called ballads have, nevertheless, slight elements of narrative in them. Sharp, for instance, prints *My Man John* (No. 67, p. 150) as a lyric, but actually it tells, chiefly in dialogue form, the story of a successful courtship. It is really hard to draw the line in such border cases. The reader will notice that the following song is not altogether devoid of narrative eventualities.

Gently, Johnny My Jingalo

Sharp, No. 65, p. 146. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.





Worthy of careful notice in this folk-song is the curiously wrought rhythmic balance of the final refrain. Phrase *b* serves both as a resolution of preceding phrase *a* and as an anticipation of the following and concluding phrase *c*, as indicated by the larger brackets which overlap.

Throughout the chapter we have been discussing alternating refrains, end refrains, and refrains in still other forms, the latter group being too varied and heterogeneous in its membership to be distinguished by generic features. The following tabulation will show the proportion of ballads in the more important collections which have refrains, and among those that do, it will indicate the distribution among the three general groups named above and used throughout the chapter as a rough basis of classification. To be noted are the much higher proportion of refrains in the folk-song groups, as opposed to Child; that the simple alternating refrains form a relatively small part of the total number; that the end refrain shows prevaillingly the highest percentage of the three groups. Adding totals, it will appear that if our folk-song collections form an approximately correct index to traditional reality as it exists at present, or within recent years, then slightly less than half of the ballads in oral circulation have refrains of one sort or another. The prevaillingly close resemblance of the figures and percentages of the different collections argues in favor of their accuracy as reflections of true traditional conditions. They represent, it must not be forgotten, widely separated geographical areas in the English-speaking world.

Collection	I	II	III	IV	V
	Total No. of Ballads	Total No. of Refrains & percentage of Refrains of Column I.	Alternating Refrains & percentage of Refrains of Column II.	End Refrains & percentage of Refrains of Column II.	Other forms & percentage of Refrains of Col. II.
Child	305	73 (24%)	24 (33%)	23 (32%)	26 (36%)
Camp. & Sharp	55	22 (40%)	3	15	4
Greig	76	35 (46%)	8	20	7
Smith	11	4 (36%)	0	3	1
Barry	45	20 (44%)	5	10	5
Davis	43	16 (37%)	2	7	7
Cox	25	9 (36%)	1	6	2
J.F.S.S.	41	13 (32%)	4	8	1
Broadwood					
Baring-Gould					
Folk-song totals	296	119 (40%)	23 (19%)	69 (58%)	27 (23%)

## INFLUENCE OF MUSIC

The foregoing array of illustrations shows clearly that the

refrain, as an element of folk-song, is delineated, characterized, and otherwise distinguished chiefly by its poetry as opposed to its music. It would seem at first a little curious to suppose, then, that the refrain, partial as it is to the element of language and so forcibly conditioned by it, should originally have developed by reason of musical causation. Yet there is every reason to presume that such is the case, even though the presumption is obviously not demonstrable. The refrain is evidently analogous in its mode of inception to the stanza. Neither is an instrument of expression whose origin could well be superinduced by the natural laws and processes of spoken language alone, either in prose or meter. Stanzaic text, however, is uncompromisingly required by the melody of song. And it seems clear that the lyric and repetitious nature of melody must account -- at least in large part -- for the existence of refrain; for where can refrains be found in traditional poetry not associated with music? Perhaps a sufficiently subtle cogitator could explain the refrain satisfactorily in psychological conceptions. I cannot do so past making the vague and inadequate observation that refrains provide the opportunity for utilizing to the utmost the musical ideas in simple melody, and provide an ornamental variation which is satisfying both by its difference and by the cumulative effect of its repeated use. The latter effect, conceived in terms of the singers' or hearers' musical and rhythmic sensibilities, certainly plays an important part in music which is used for dancing. Without committing myself as either for or against a theory of the folk-dance as a way of accounting for refrains, I feel constrained to mention that, from actual observation of and experience with folk-dancing -- an art which still survives in some parts of the country -- I am persuaded that music having refrain is much better adapted for such dancing than any other kind. No matter from what angle the question is approached, however, it is impossible to escape the conviction that if music were unknown or had not been associated with folk-poetry, neither the stanza nor the refrain would have had any reasonable or easily imaginable justification for appearing on the human scene.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The following statements about the ballad refrain may be summarized by way of conclusion:

1. Logical definition of the ballad refrain is not practicable for purposes of discussion, but in usage the name refrain implies an element which is not strictly narrative and which is repetitious.
2. The folk-song collections, probably reliable indices to traditional practice, indicate that a little less than half the ballads in circulation within recent times are involved with refrains.
3. The language of the refrain is normally far more essential to its individuality than is the accompanying music.
4. Refrains fall naturally into three main classes: (1) alternating refrains, (2) end refrains, (3) refrains of other

sorts in wide variety. The end refrains form the largest group and constitute the most characteristic form of refrain in balladry.

5. Alternating and end refrains are not always mutually exclusive elements, but are sometimes found in the same stanza.

6. Refrain texts sometimes assist in telling the ballad story; at other times they are irrelevant to it in sense, and sometimes even alien to it in spirit.

7. When refrain texts are irrelevant or antipathetic to the idea and mood of the ballad story, their separative effect is normally obliterated or counterbalanced by the united expressive character of the melody.

8. Rational versification of texts involving refrains is best accomplished by consultation both of melodic phrasing and textual organization.

9. In all but a very few cases, refrains should be regarded as component parts of a united stanza. In rare instances conception of refrain and narrative text as separate entities may be rationalized, if preferable, on cadential ground.

10. In some ballads, part of the text involves refrain, and the remaining part does not, the refrains being replaced by narrative lines.

11. The music set to stanzas involving refrains is always, and by its nature, a definitely unified sentence, even when important cadential or other interruptions occur within its bounds.

12. Refrains are sometimes composed of legitimate words, sometimes of nonsense syllables, sometimes of both. When dissociated from the sense of the story, they sometimes express collateral ideas not germane to it; at other times they express no intelligible ideas.

13. Alternating refrains, forming the most important group usually known as internal, are found in both CM and LM patterns with approximately equal frequency.

14. In the case of end refrains repeating narrative verses, there is normally an analogous repetition of musical phrase.

15. In the case of end refrains not repeating narrative verses, there is often a repetition of musical phrase, or the formation of new phrases out of the same fundamental material.

16. The narrative portions of stanzas involving end refrains are most often CM or LM patterns, though single lines, couplets, and other forms are occasionally encountered.

17. End refrains repeating narrative lines repeat either one or two lines and no more.

18. End refrains not repeating narrative verses may consist of a single line, a couplet, a triad, a quatrain, or (rarely) an even longer organization of verses. Of these the couplet and quatrain are most common.

19. End refrains may either repeat material out of their respective stanzas or repeat the same organization of elements (perhaps with variations) throughout the whole ballad.

20. When texts are printed without music, refrains are, on purely poetic grounds alone, never negligible, though sometimes

treated as such. Often they make important contributions to the peculiar qualities of individuality or distinction which the stanza happens to have.

21. Refrain texts, as a form of poetry, are sometimes distinctly inferior to the general level set by their accompanying narrative verses.

22. It is altogether likely that the refrain, like the stanza, is a form whose existence, at least in large part, must be accounted for in terms of music.

## Chapter Nine MEASURE AND STRESS

In the preceding chapters we have noted and studied numerous examples of folk-song and the folk-poetry derived from it. In those pages I have endeavored to show what stanza and verse are and mean in folk-song, and how these facts bear upon the stanza and verse forms of the poetic texts. In doing so I have accorded only incidental attention to the internal rhythm of the verses concerned. The disregard, however, has been in the nature of postponement rather than neglect. It has been necessary to the orderly progress of the study, and has, I believe, done no violence to true principle, for the internal structure of the verse in no way affects its existence as a complete unit or whole, and it is as such that we have so far been primarily concerned with it.

Nevertheless, in the rhythmic interpretations upon which I have been basing the notation of ballad texts, I have perforce been obliged to assume as facts certain matters which require theoretical justification in the final analysis. The principles of poetic scansion laid down in the second chapter have their roots partly in the realities of folk-song, from which the texts themselves have come. The present chapter, consequently, aims partly to elucidate the subject of verse rhythm in a new way, and also partly to reassure the reader that the readings presented in the foregoing pages are fundamentally sound.

Nowhere in balladry does the taste of the individual reader play a more important part than in the determination of what stresses are and where they occur, their relative force when compared with one another, and so on. In this analysis I shall make no attempt whatever to establish dogmatic idols of correctness in my interpretations of rhythmic values. I am perfectly aware that no two persons would read a ballad verse in quite the same way, whether as music or poetry. There is not the slightest good reason why they should do so, provided the variant readings are consistent with the truth of the spirit in the music or poetry which they are attempting to understand or to express for the understanding of others. The observations which I shall set down here represent my own feeling of rhythmic movement in music and poetry, and their value will depend upon how closely and truthfully they correspond to the general rhythmic sense of discriminating readers and singers. This can be, in the end, the only reliable check upon the validity of any rhythmic theory. Recognizing the fact, I have sought throughout the study the assistance and advice of readers qualified to hold intelligent opinions, and my final conclusions, as here set forth, have been to a certain degree tested by this means. They should therefore, I suppose, run a fairly good chance of corresponding to universal, and not merely relative and peculiar psychological reality, and that is the only kind of reality that rhythm appears to have at all.

### STRESS IN FOLK-SONG

The proper starting point for a study of ballad verse rhythm is in the stresses by which it is perceived. And we shall best



get at the facts of this rhythm, whether in the form of music or poetry, by finding out what it is like in the folk-songs where music and poetry are combined.

The understanding of stress in folk-song, fortunately, is not obstructed by certain perplexing problems with which stress is involved in some other departments of musical and poetic art. We need not be dismayed by the debatable relation of stress to rhythm in poetry generally. In ballad poetry and in ballad song the rhythm is defined by stress without possibility of doubt. Nor need the mysteries of the psychological realization of stress and the impracticability of its satisfactory formal definition give rise to apprehension. The reality of stress is as clear as the sun to all physically normal human beings. The real problem before us is to determine how and where stresses occur in folk-song, and what relative parts are played by music and poetry in establishing the accentual pattern which every folk-song has.

Let us begin by examining two folk-songs, the first scored in simple (in this instance  $3/4$ ) and the second in compound (in this instance  $4/4$ ) time.

#### Robin Hood and the Tanner

Sharp, No. 4, p. 8. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.

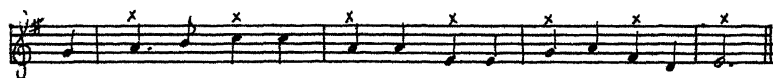
Bold Ar-der went forth one sum-mer morn-ing, To view the mer-ry green wood;  
 For to hunt for the deer that run here and there, And there he es-pied Rob-in  
 Hood, - Aye, - and there he es-pied Rob-in Hood.

Bold<sup>x</sup> Ar-der went<sup>x</sup> forth one<sup>x</sup> sum-mer<sup>x</sup> morn-ing,<sup>x</sup>  
 To<sup>x</sup> view the<sup>x</sup> mer-ry green<sup>x</sup> wood;<sup>x</sup>  
 For to<sup>x</sup> hunt for the<sup>x</sup> deer that<sup>x</sup> run here and<sup>x</sup> there,<sup>x</sup>  
 And<sup>x</sup> there he es-pied Rob-in<sup>x</sup> Hood,<sup>x</sup> Aye,<sup>x</sup>  
 And<sup>x</sup> there he es-pied Rob-in<sup>x</sup> Hood.<sup>x</sup>

#### The False Lover Won Back

Greig, No. 2, p. 155.

The sun shines high on yon-der hill, An' low in yon-der glen;



An' in the place where my love dwells The sun gangs ne-ver doon

The sun shines high on yonder hill,

An' low in yonder glen,

An' in the place where my love dwells

The sun gangs never doon.

The first fact to be observed about these two songs concerns their melodies alone. It can be seen that each melody has a clearly recognizable scheme of regular stresses. For convenience I have marked these stresses with a superscript X. The first melody shows that stress occurs once in every simple measure, and the second melody makes it clear that stress occurs twice in every compound (or double) measure. The relative force of these regular stresses will be considered later. Our purpose at the moment is to observe only their regularity.

Let us now turn to the words below the melody. It will appear that stresses occur regularly throughout the verses when read as poetry, and that this fact is true without regard to the musical notes above. That is, if the notes were not there, the stresses, in reading, would be present in the verses nevertheless.<sup>1</sup> I have marked the verse stresses also with a superscript X.

By comparison of the melodies with their text-stanzas, a third fact now emerges. In its explanation we shall do well to examine one song at a time, taking first The False Lover Won Back. The regular stresses of its music and its verse coincide in their positions throughout the song. In singing the stanza, no conflict prevails between the natural stress pattern of the music and that of the poetry set to it.<sup>2</sup> Clearly both are a-

<sup>1</sup> The reality of the stresses and the rhythmic divisions established by them in the musical phrases and poetic verses above must be accepted on the evidence of intuition alone. If this evidence is not present in the mind, rhythm has, and can have, no intelligible reality. In mathematics we can prove by reasoning that the square on the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides -- provided we believe, to start with, that straight lines are straight, triangles triangular, and squares square. Likewise, in the present subject we are obliged by necessity to believe, at the outset, that rhythm is rhythmical, postulating stress and measure as axiomatic facts without being able to explain reasonably why these facts appear to be real. At the bottom of all ballad rhythm, whether in music or poetry, is the division of the verse-unit into equal time periods marked out by a series of regular stresses, which define the simple or ground rhythm of melody, poetry, and folk-song.

<sup>2</sup> In speaking here or elsewhere of the "natural stress pattern of poetry" I have reference to the accentual scheme inherent in metrical language, not prose or language in general. The distinction is important. In the above

dapted to fit each other, and both take an active part in establishing the rhythmic pattern of the folk-song which they combine, in a material sense, to form. In its exact and complete coincidence of accentual patterns, however, this song is not quite typical of balladry.

A better exemplar of stress relationship in folk-song as we usually find it is the first of the above illustrations, namely, Robin Hood and the Tanner. In this song complete coincidence of stress patterns is not achieved, a violation occurring in the fourth measure. The word morning as spoken has no natural accent on its final syllable, but it must have such an accent when it is sung in this stanza, for the musical stress imposes it, striking upon the final syllable of the word.

In the song-stanza of the average ballad there are often one or two, perhaps several, such instances where the stress of the melody strikes upon a syllable of the language which in poetic form would not naturally be accented. These conflicts (they can be called conflicts only in an analytical sense) ordinarily disturb the basic rhythmic movement of neither the melody nor the poetry which happens to be involved. Their presence simply means, as a rule, that either melody or poetry at a given point (or points) must make a concession to the accentual scheme of the other; that is, one or the other must have what is generally known as wrenched accent. Since the relatively fixed and rigid stress system of music will not, as a rule, admit violation of its regularity, the necessary concession, in practice, is made by the poetry, for here it can be made easily, and as a rule, gracefully.

In the two songs just examined the stress patterns of music and poetry so closely resemble each other that they are actual counterparts. The False Lover Won Back shows two musical stresses, paralleled by two verse stresses, in each measure. The parallel relationship may be shown graphically in this way:

<u>Music:</u>	①	2	③	4		①	2	③	4
<u>Verse:</u>	①	2	③	4		①	2	③	4

Numbers represent beats, not syllables. Stressed beats are designated by circles. The cadence measures form exceptions to the prevailing syllabic pattern, of course, but they may fairly be said to have the same rhythmic pattern as the measures which precede or follow them. That is, in terms of rhythmic movement and feeling, the diagram represents every regular measure in the song.

The same twinship of accentual configuration appears in Robin Hood and the Tanner.

<u>Music:</u>	①	2	3		①	2	3
<u>Verse:</u>	①	2	3		①	2	3

stanza from The False Lover Won Back, for instance, the word my in the third line receives a stronger stress by virtue of its metrical position than it would normally have if its particular verse happened to be read not as poetry at all, but as a segment of prose context.

Generalizing, it may be said that accentual correspondence of this type is the fact in most ballad songs. Wherever it occurs it may be called parallel coincidence of stress. It is what one might expect to find in songs developed by singers who do not habitually analyze them into component elements of text and tune. Let us observe this form of coincidence in several other time signatures common in balladry. In 6/8 time the metrical figures match together in this wise:

Music: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6  
Verse: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6

This pattern is illustrated in Lord Thomas and Fair Ellinor from Campbell and Sharp, No. 16E, p. 59. (Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons)

Come well to me, dear Mother, he says Come well me your de-  
 sign; whe- ther I marry fair El- li- nor dear, Or  
 bring you the brown girl home, home, home, Or bring you the brown girl home

The above song-stanza shows wrenched accent in the word whether, but not elsewhere. We may, in passing, observe in this song, albeit somewhat roughly, another aspect of mutual adjustment between poetry and melody -- that of syllabication. In folk-song, as would be expected, the syllabic quantities and rhythmic patterns of spoken language clearly exercise a very strong influence upon melody. This fact is patent, for example, in the first two measures of this song. The matter becomes very clear if the words set to the phrase are first spoken in a natural way, and then sung to the melody.

A variant of Henry Martin (from Kidson, p. 30) will show parallel stress coincidence in 6/4 time.

Music: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6  
Verse: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6

There lived three brothers in merry Scotland! In merry Scotland lived brothers three, And  
 they did cast lots which should rob on the sea, salt sea, To main-tain his two brothers and he

Methods in the musical notation of folk-song vary somewhat. In Barry's volume the 12/8 signature is often used. A measure so designated will ordinarily embrace a whole ballad verse, and will contain four stresses. But coincidence of stress is not thereby complicated, for the long 12/8 measure is essentially the same thing as two 6/8 measures placed end to end.

Music: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 ⑦ 8 9 ⑩ 11 12 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 ⑦ 8 9 ⑩ 11 12  
Verse: ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 ⑦ 8 9 ⑩ 11 12 | ① 2 3 ④ 5 6 ⑦ 8 9 ⑩ 11 12

The False-Hearted Knight

Barry, No. 4E, p. 22. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press

When she arrived at her father's house, Three ho-urs before it was day, The  
 parrot he began to talk, And unto her did say, 'O  
 Nancy, O Nancy, where have you been, All on this long summer's day?'

Folk-songs sometimes appear in 2/2 time. This rhythm, though different from that of common time, is like it in being compound and having parallel stress coincidence. Furthermore, the measures, as the illustration will show, prevaillingly contain four beats rather than two beats, though certain of the measures establish the two-beat movement so strongly that the whole rhythmic character of the stanza is affected.

Music: ① 2 ③ 4 | ① 2 ③ 4  
Verse: ① 2 ③ 4 | ① 2 ③ 4

The Cruel Brother

Campbell and Sharp, No. 5, p. 20. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

There's three fair maids went out to play at ball, I - o the li - ly gay, There's  
 three land-lords come court them all, And the rose smells so sweet I know

It has been stated above that parallel stress coincidence is the rule in most ballad songs. We have seen it illustrated in the signatures 6/8, 3/4, 4/4, 6/4, 12/8, and 2/2. It should be added that 4/4 and 6/8 are the most common signatures in folk-song.

A considerable number of ballads are recorded, however, in whose accentual structure the patterns of music and verse do not run exactly parallel. Where this is true, we may say that accentual coincidence is oblique. This is true of ballads in 3/2 and in 5/4 time. The former is very commonly found; the latter is not common, though well known.

Among all the examples shown above, only one, Sharp's Robin Hood and the Tanner (signature 3/4), is in the form of triple time relative to the measures as scored. In all of the others, the compound measures are duple, being rhythmically divided at midpoint in the schemes  $\dot{1} \ 2 : \dot{1} \ 2$ ,  $\dot{1} \ 2 \ 3 : \dot{1} \ 2 \ 3$ , etc. But the 3/2 measure (like the 3/4 measure) is asymmetrical and triplicate, containing three stresses, in the order  $\dot{1} \ 2 : \dot{1} \ 2 : \dot{1} \ 2$ . The simple measures of ballad poetry, however, are always compounded in the duple pattern, never in any other way. This means that the song measure in 3/2 time must usually contain three musical stresses only two of which can coincide with the two natural stresses of the accompanying poetic measure. The oblique adjustment resulting from this situation commonly assumes one of two regular figures.

Figure A.      Music:    ① 2 ③ 4 ⑤ 6  
                   Verse:    ①   2   ③   4

This figure is illustrated in Sharp's Bruton Town: (Sharp, No. 2, p. 4. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)

In Bruton Town there lived a farmer Who had two sons and one daughter dear, By  
 day and night they were a-contriving To fill their parents hearts with fear.

It will be seen, however, in the third and seventh measures of the song-stanza, that when the syllabic content of any measure is great enough to supply separate words for each musical stress, exceptions to the pattern occur. In such exceptional measures the song-stanza assumes the basic three-stress pattern of the melody in an active and articulate way. It is the rhythmic syncopation of the prolonged syllable in the other measures which prevents this from happening.

The second stock figure is built up in this way:

Figure B.

Music: ① 2 ③ 4 ⑤ 6  
 Verse: ① 2 ③ 4

It is illustrated in the following song. The fifth measure, it will be noted, is irregular.

Young Beichan

Campbell and Sharp, No. 12E, p. 40. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

There was a man who lived in England And he was of some high de-  
 gree; He became un-easy, dis-con-tented, Some fair land, some land to see

In 5/4 time the situation is slightly different still. Obviously two stresses cannot come at equal intervals in a sequence of five regular beats. In practice, they strike upon the first and third beats of the measure. The following variant of Barbara Allen will illustrate. (Sharp, No. 7, p. 20. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)

In Scotland I was born and bred, In Scotland I was dwelling, When a  
 young man on his deathbed lay, For the sake of Bar-bra Ellen

In songs involving oblique accentual relationships, we may summarize, the general or basic stress pattern is set by the music; but the stress figure actually heard (not merely felt to be latent in the underlying movement) is determined, as a rule, by the natural stresses of the poetry involved.

But no matter how adjusted to each other or how influenced by one another, it may be concluded, poetry and music fit into a well-achieved rhythmic unity in the folk-song, a unity made possible by the close similarity between the rhythmic principles of the two elements as separate arts. Both poetry and melody, as we have seen, are rhythimized on the fundamental basis of the division of the verse or phrase into a series of equal time periods marked by a regular system of stresses.

TIME VARIATIONS WITHIN THE TUNE

Like most other general rules connected with our subject, the one just made is frequently broken in practice. Individual measures, or groups of measures are often at variance with the time

signature affixed at the beginning of the tune, and these time shifts within the melody are common enough (without being altogether usual) to be counted a characteristic feature of ballad song. On the whole, the time shifts appear to result from the ungrammatical attitude of the singers toward their art. As Sharp has well pointed out,<sup>3</sup> folk-music is the product of instinct rather than of reasoned formulation. Following a natural impulse toward expression in song, the untutored musician is very easily led to occasional unconscious disregard of the strict mathematical consistency ordinarily observed by educated composers who habitually record their work on paper.

Aside from this generalization, however, irregular time is susceptible to certain fairly definite explanations. Although one or two of these have already been advanced in earlier connections, it is advisable at this point to summarize briefly our knowledge of this phenomenon.

First, in rare cases, a ballad refrain may embody what is virtually a separate air of its own, having its own time signature and rhythmic movement. A notable instance may be seen in Sharp's Lord Rendal, page 21 above. The main portion of this melody is in common time, but the refrain is in 6/4. Of course this sort of time variation is in no sense a mere irregularity. It is of integral importance to the song. Along with the concomitant melodic change, it is, in fact, of prime significance in expressing the individual excellence of the melody. In rare instances of this kind, the verses set to the special refrain music are themselves special in character. (See the scansion of Lord Rendal on page 74 above.)

Far more common is the shortening of a measure by reason of the singer's impatience to be on with the next phrase of his song. There is little to add to the discussion of this matter on pages 66 and 67 above. (Other instances may be seen on pages 116 and 112.) This form of abbreviation occurs typically in measures forming the connecting link between adjacent phrases -- or, as it might be said in the cadence measures. Its effect upon the words in the song-stanza is slight where it exists at all. The final syllable of the phrase may be a little less prolonged; or, if only the time occupied by the musical rest is cut short, the words themselves remain unaffected. In the spoken poetry derived from such a stanza there is no result whatever from the metrical apocope of the music.

Another common species of time shift results from the arbitrary holding of certain notes past their prescribed limits. The Campbell and Sharp collection contains a considerable number of tunes showing this peculiarity. The matter has already been discussed at such length on pages 65 and 66 above that little or nothing need be added here by way of comment. This form of irregularity arises from the extension of an actual syllable, so that the words of the song-stanza are always concerned, but the change belongs wholly to the musical form of the verses, and makes no difference at all in the spoken stanza. (This form

<sup>3</sup>  
English Folk-Song: Some Conclusions, p. 82.



of variation is not, as Sharp supposed,<sup>4</sup> peculiar to Southern American ballads and unknown to British folk-song. An instance of it can be seen in The Unquiet Grave as recorded in Sharp's own volume One Hundred English Folk-Songs, p. 56.)

Sometimes measures appear to become irregular through the influence of adjacent measures which are already irregular owing to one or another of the causes just described. A different feeling of rhythm once present in the song is apt, it seems, to extend its operation in either direction. The effect of such contagion, I think, may be seen in the following stanza. The prevailing time is  $3/2$ . The fourth measure (at the medial cadence) is shortened to  $2/2$ , and the two neighboring measures have the same time. My theory of explanation is advanced only as a theory; demonstration is clearly out of the question.

Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight

Campbell and Sharp, No. 2D, p. 6. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

There was a pro-per tall young man, And William was his  
name; He came a-way over the ra-ging sea, He  
came a-court-ing me, O me, He came a-court-ing me.

The musical notation is on three staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 3/2. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Above the first staff, there are annotations: '3' over the first measure, '2' over the second measure, and '3' over the third measure. The second staff continues the melody with similar note values. The third staff concludes the phrase with a final cadence.

The various theories presented above, however, will not always account satisfactorily for all of the numerous and capricious variations occasionally to be seen in a single melody. In the following example the time is so varied that the melody cannot rightly be said to have any regular time pattern at all.

Young Hunting

Campbell and Sharp, No. 15E, p. 52. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

Come in, come in my own true love, And stay all night with  
me; And all these costly cards that I wear around my waist I'll  
freely give them unto thee, thee, thee, I'll freely give them unto thee.

The musical notation is on three staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The time signature is 3/2. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The second staff continues the melody. The third staff concludes the phrase with a final cadence.

Engl. Folk-Songs from the S. Appel., Int., p. x.

With the exception of verses set to special refrains -- an extremely small class -- we may conclude that the element of varied and irregular time in ballad song is a strictly musical concern, being unaffected by the form of the poetic verses, and having no effect upon them.

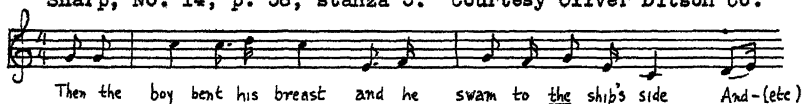
## WRENCHED ACCENT

Sharp's variant of Robin Hood and the Tanner shown on page 128, has specifically illustrated one form -- the most usual form -- of wrenched accent. This phenomenon is virtually universal in folk-song and extremely common in folk-poetry. It is sometimes critically alluded to in a disparaging fashion,<sup>5</sup> but it is doubtful if the derogation is, on the whole, deserved. In ballad song, to be sure, wrenched accent forms an exception to the regular rule of stress coincidence between text and tune, but the essential rhythmic coincidence necessary to the song is seldom seriously violated. Wrenched accent, it is fair to say, often provides a pleasing variety from the smooth regularity of the ground rhythm. Folk-song is consequently rather enriched than impoverished, on the whole, by its occurrence. And the same thing, I believe, can fairly be said of ballad poetry. Abnormal modes of accentuation are one of the things which give to the ballads their inimitably peculiar character and charm.

Wrenched accent is more various than is generally recognized. Properly regarded, it cannot be thought of as restricted to the reversal of stress in bisyllabic or polysyllabic words. It includes, by right, all instances of accentuation which are at variance with the natural stresses of language. It may fall, and often does, upon monosyllabic words. The following phrase will show how this happens. I should add that, in my effort to select a clear-out example, I have chosen one which exhibits more rhythmic awkwardness than is usually involved.

The Golden Vanity

Sharp, No. 14, p. 36, stanza 3. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



Certainly, in reading the verse as poetry, no one would naturally adhere to the musical accent falling upon the word the (italicized above). In the poetic line the reading would assume

5

Wrenched accent in balladry is not, in any proper sense, mere crudity, as sometimes supposed. Critics should be on guard against the tacit assumption that ballad makers have been trying to attain the exact qualities of sophisticated art, and not succeeding. Such matters as wrenched accent, irregular time, nonsense refrains, provincial diction, archaic scales, et al., are not blemishes, but characters making positive contributions. Persons to whom ballads are an enjoyable art, rather than a subject for dissection, usually feel that wrenched accent, in song or text, is seldom disagreeable, and is sometimes capable of graceful, even subtle and beautiful effects.

a pattern somewhat like the following.<sup>6</sup>

Then the|boy|bent his|breast|and he|swam to the|ship's|side  
 ♪

My treatment of wrenched accent up to this point would imply that its presence in the song-verse does not presuppose its retention in the text-verse. This principle seems to me to be a sound one, and I shall attempt briefly to explain why.

When a text is abstracted from folk-song, it should be allowed, on general principle, to retain as much as it can hold of the character and coloring which it had (or has) in its musical form. This principle has been laid down earlier in our investigation and consistently applied. As previously shown, it means a definition of stanza and verse in terms of melody and melodic phrasing. The rationality of such definition, however, depends partly on the fact that the natural divisions of melody are likewise the natural divisions of the verses associated with it. There is no structural discrepancy or conflict between the two. Both lead to the same result.

Now, the patterns of stress and syllabication within the verses of folk-song are, at many points, different by nature in the musical form from what they are in the spoken form. Most obvious of all, the timing of the syllables in the poetic verse does not and cannot follow that of the syllables in their musical setting. Music prolongs and abbreviates words in a manner quite alien to the true character of spoken poetry. This is self-evident, and the result of it is that, in the reading of the ballad text, we always necessarily arrange the timing of the spoken syllables in accordance with the dictates of poetic sense and feeling. In other words, we cannot tell all we need to know about reading or speaking a text from the way in which we sing it. The poetry itself, and its inherent laws of form, in practice, assist, and must assist, in determining the internal syllabic patterns of the verses. For instance, the following line<sup>7</sup>

It's come go back, my pretty lit-tle Miss, It's (etc.)  
 ♪

is not poetically rendered, as the musical syllabication indicates:

It's|come go|back my|pretty little|Miss  
 ♪

<sup>6</sup> Of course individual readings might differ slightly from this one, but not, I think, in fundamental stresses. The word *the*, for instance, clearly belongs at the end of the fifth measure, not at the beginning of the sixth. This scansion takes into account only the simple rhythm of the verse, but this fact does not matter in the determination of measure boundaries.

<sup>7</sup>

Campbell and Sharp, No. 27F, p. 116. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons.

but rather as:

It's | come go | back my | pretty little | Miss  
 ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

If we thus follow poetic law in syllabication, why not also follow it in the matter of stress? To a certain degree, determined by the taste of the reader, we clearly should. It is evident that there is no real conflict, generally speaking, between the rhythms of music and poetic language in folk-song. Consequently, when the text is lifted out, the stresses which it had in the song will be, in general, the same as those belonging to its poetic status. But in those frequent, though exceptional, instances where the music shows one mode of accentuation and the spoken verses demand another, the poetry, in general terms, should determine the matter. After all, poetry is not exactly song, nor will it best preserve the value of song as an art if its own artistic integrity is violated by the attempt to make it do so. The arrangement of verses in ballad poetry must, I think, be properly governed by the principle of compromise, directed and exercised in accordance with sound poetic taste. Any complete formula would be dangerous. The music will, in almost all cases, indicate clearly the basic pattern of the ground rhythm. This should be followed in the text as a guide. But the allocation of individual stresses within the limits of the pattern involves decisions in which both poetic value and musical authority should cast votes.

This is the principle which I have applied to the poetic notation of all text-stanzas so far printed in the dissertation, including those above whose musical form involves wrenched accent. Perhaps one more explicit example would not be out of place. The following phrase is from Sharp's Barbara Ellen. (The full stanza is printed on page 134 above. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)



Here we must make a choice in the matter of poetic reading and notation. The musical accentuation provides the following version:

When a | young man | on his | death-bed | lay  
 ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

But the verse, aside from the music, seems to me to read more naturally and gracefully in this wise:

When a | young man | on his | death-bed | lay  
 ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

The latter reading, I daresay, is poetically superior, and it does no violence to the basic ground-rhythm pattern nor the true character of the folk-song whose qualities we are interest-

ed in retaining and preserving as far as may be.

A different question now naturally comes up. Under what circumstances, then, is wrenched accent properly present in the poetic stanza?

It should be observed in the text-stanza, I believe, in cases where it is already present in the musical form, and where its disregard in the poetry would disrupt the rhyme scheme or any other artistically integral feature. For example, wrenched accent is properly a part of both song- and text-stanza in the following situation.

Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight

Campbell and Sharp, No. 2A, p. 3. Courtesy G. P. Putnam's Sons

5. O turn your back to the billowy waves, Your face to the leaves of the tree, For it  
ill be- seems an out-land-ish knight Should view a stark la- dy.

O|turn your|back to the|billowy|waves,  
Your|face to the|leaves of the|tree,  
For it|ill be|seems an|outlandish|knight  
Should|view a|stark lady.

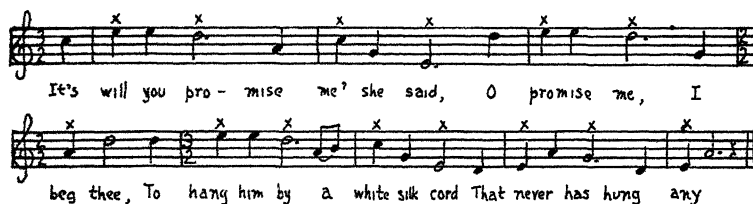
Stanzas of this type are common among the ballads. No doubt readers will differ somewhat in their respective views as to what is the best reading. In the stanza above most readers would probably choose to pronounce lady with a strong final accent, leaving the initial syllable altogether unstressed. Occasionally I have heard experienced readers of ballad verse allow a distribution of accent to both syllables of words in such situations. I have heard other readers pronounce such words with stress on the initial syllable, being careful at the same time, though, to keep the rhythm in its true chronological order, so that the metrical stress is felt on the final syllable of the word. The latter is a very subtle and pleasing effect, and can only be appreciated in an actual and a skillful reading. I need not add that wrenched accent is a real part of each of these modes of vocal rendition. The only differences among them are those concerned with the precise manner in which it is recognized.

All of this critical deference to the importance of wrenched accent does not mean, in any sense, that the feminine ending is not a common reality in both the music and poetry of the ballad. An interesting case is the following from Campbell and Sharp --

one of a great many instances which could be cited from that collection.<sup>8</sup>

Geordie

No. 28B, p. 118, stanza 6. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



It's|will you|promise|me! she|said,  
 O|promise|me, I|beg thee,  
 To|hang him|by a|white silk|cord  
 That|never|has hung|any.

MUSICAL BASIS OF WRENCHED ACCENT

The reader may try, in any of the stanzas printed above, or elsewhere to his heart's content, the experiment of both singing and reading the verses wherein a wrenched accent belongs. He will find that the sense of oddity or distortion, no matter how strong it may be in the spoken poetry, is far less so always in the singing, and in fact is often not even present there at all. Music handles language in a peculiar way of its own. It lengthens syllables, shortens them, accents them, and endows them with qualities of pitch in ways which violate the usage and conventions of spoken speech. This is nowhere more true than in folk-song, for, in matters of stress especially, the unsophisticated creators of this art are not so attentive to precision in rhythmic coincidence as are the musicians trained in the schools. Yet even in folk-song, and, one might say, even in folk-song at its lower levels, one is seldom if ever conscious (unless pleasantly conscious) of the difference between the musical treatment of the language and its spoken form. In song form wrenched accent is usually unnoticed, or if it be, in some awkward instances, it does not seem violently wrenched, at any rate, as it does when spoken.

It is not hard, then, to understand the prevalence of wrenched accent in the ballads. First, there is the figure of the traditional singer, unversed in the grammatical method and theory of the schools of music. Second, there is the art of ballad composition, not in spoken form, but in song form. Or, if one objects

8

The feminine ending appears to be one among numerous minute configurations of accent and syllable pointing to the influence of verbal patterns of accentuation upon melody in the course of the development of folk-song.

to such an assumption, there is the traditional evolution of the ballad in song form, which in the end amounts to the same thing. The point is that the wrenched accents do not make themselves very evident in the songs. Mostly they seem so natural that any one, not least of all a peasant, would never suspect their existence.

The real nature and rational explanation of wrenched accent was clearly felt by William Motherwell as early as 1827. In his introduction to Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern he writes in part:<sup>9</sup> "the accent not unfrequently falls on syllables at variance with our present mode of pronunciation; and they have throughout the marks of a composition not meant for being committed to writing, but whose music formed an essential part of it, and from which it could not well be separated, without seriously interfering with its unity and injuring its effect."

In a word, it would hardly be conceivable, under the actual conditions, that folk-song could avoid an abundance of wrenched accents. When these occur in the texts, as we have seen, it is when the syllable involved has coincided with a stress in the rhythmic pattern of its song. It is perfectly clear from all of this that wrenched accent is not mere poetic bungling, nor a survival of "pitch accent," nor a relic of Norman pronunciation, though it has been declared to be the latter by one theorist.<sup>10</sup> Wrenched accent is really a natural and inevitable consequence of the development of verses in musical form by generations of people who had never heard of wrenched accent, in song or out of it, and who had no reason in the world to be on guard against its appearance.

#### ON READING THE BALLAD TEXT

The present discussion has been dealing, to some degree, with matters of taste and poetic expediency -- matters, on the whole, too relative and subjective to be disposed of by rule of thumb. But the problem of stress relationship between text and tune occupies such an important position in the whole investigation that it seems advisable here to draw together (even at the expense of repeating some remarks made a moment ago) the significant points emerging from the evidence just reviewed. The closest approach I can make toward a definite theory of how the stresses in the poetic text of a ballad should be fixed, given the music for reference, would be something of this sort:

We start again from the underlying principle that the text should represent the character of the folk-song as closely as it can truly be made to do so. Thus the pattern of simple rhythm in the folk-song should be the guide to the rhythmic pattern of the poetic stanza, as a general rule. This means that the number of stresses in the text-verse should be the same as the number in the song-verse, and that these stresses should, generally

9

Introduction, pp. xvii-xviii.

10

The reference is to Professor Pound's statement in Poetic Origins and the Ballad, pp. 109-110.

speaking, strike upon the same syllables. But important reservations should, at the same time, be held in mind. In all cases where a strict adherence to the stress pattern of the song-stanza results in appreciable damage to the artistic value of the poetry as such, poetic considerations should be the final guide and ultimate court of appeal. Poetic expediency should cast the deciding vote in the matter of wrenched accent. And in those rare situations (to be explained later) where the rhythmic pattern of the song-verse differs fundamentally from the pattern inherent in the text-verse, poetic requirements should settle the matter.

These reservations, I believe, involve no real paradox of principle, as explained on page 139. To disregard them, it seems to me, is to defeat the real purpose of preserving the representative character of the text as a product of tradition. In a word, and to summarize the matter: Whereas melodic phraseology should be paramount in determining the shape of stanza and verse as units of form, the musical rhythm should exercise only an advisory and not a dictatorial function in determining the stress-pattern (and its corollary division of the line into measures) within the verse. I imagine that this is about as close as we can come to formulating a rational explanation of how the simple rhythm of folk-song may most successfully be translated into the simple rhythm of ballad poetry.

From the preceding evidence we are also able to learn certain useful things about the reading of texts whose music is not available for reference:

1. The ground rhythm which the verses had in the song will, as a rule, be apparent in the poetic form, since, barring rare exceptions, both poetry and song possess this basic pattern in common.
2. Wrenched accent and feminine ending are both realities of folk-song, so that both have proper places in ballad poetry on musical authority. If a choice must be made between the two in a given situation, poetic advisability (lacking the guidance of the music) must decide.
3. The study of the music has shown the justice and desirability of following the natural stresses of language in the poetry.

#### COMPOUND RHYTHM

Rhythm, whether simple or compound, may be properly spoken of as a subjective phenomenon. Apparently it represents, among other things, an effort of the mind to grasp an extended sequence of separated sounds as a comprehensible form. The mind imposes an organized pattern upon the material it is endeavoring to deal with. This fact can be seen to advantage in the perception of rhythm in the music of the organ. Here the onset of the separate notes may be, as in the playing of hymns, mechanically equal in volume or intensity; still the hearer observes the rhythmic form. Clearly the stresses must be present in the hearer's mind, not in the organist's performance in any physical or mechanical sense. On the other hand, in singing,



or in playing the violin or piano (or any instrument where degrees of stress can be conveniently expressed) the musician, if he plays well, actually represents the stress pattern in his playing.

In principle, then, compound rhythm differs in no fundamental way from simple rhythm. Its perception represents only a shift of focus. In all complex rhythmic systems there is an ascending scale of integrations. Four such stages of organization may be distinguished in simple melody. Simplest of all is the level pattern beaten out by the individual rhythmic units of the measure. Above that is the system of stresses usually called "simple rhythm." These stresses fall upon every second or third beat, and from the pattern which they establish, the notation of "simple time" is derived. Over this comes the organization of compound rhythm, built up by combination of the simple units, and represented in the notation of double or compound time. Highest of all in the scale is the phrasal unit, which undoubtedly possesses a rhythmic value of its own, as can be easily perceived if a measure or two are lopped off from some phrase of a simple melody. The reality of phrasal rhythm (in which the phrases count as units in the complete melody) may be tested by the following expedient. The reader may first read the melody of Sharp's The Outlandish Knight, on page 8 above, then read the following version of it which is altered by the elimination of one measure in the second phrase. The ineptitude of the later melody, I think it will be agreed, results not so much from the alteration of the pitch curve as from the destruction of the rhythmic balance of the whole melody.



The four essential stages of rhythmic organization in a full phrase of this tune may be represented by diagram in this way:

- |     |                               |       |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------|
| (4) | Unit of phrasal rhythm        | ..... |
| (3) | Unit of compound rhythm       | ..... |
| (2) | Unit of simple rhythm         | ..... |
| (1) | Ultimate unit (metrical beat) | ..... |

What has just been said of the rhythm of melody is correspondingly true of the verse form of ballad poetry. Beginning with the individual beats, the scale rises to the simple measure, then to the double measure, finally to the line of verse. The rhythmic figures of ballad poetry and music may differ from each other in details, but the principle of rhythm and of rhythmic organization is a constant and alike in each.

The poetic readings presented so far in this chapter, and so

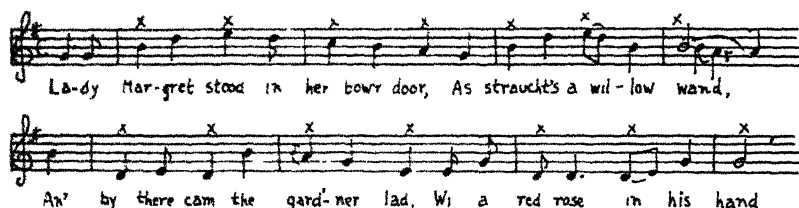
far in the dissertation, have given attention only to simple rhythm. Its notation has provided a sketch of the rhythmic pattern. From such a sketch the position of all the stresses may be observed. It serves as a guide to the rhythmic movement of the verse -- a sufficiently trustworthy and adequate one for most practical purposes of demonstration. In restricting scan-sion throughout these chapters to simple rhythm I have had in mind the simplification of our critical machinery. It has seemed best to indicate just what was essential and nothing else.

But an adequate account of verse rhythm in balladry must look further than the facts of simple rhythm. Compound rhythm is also a constant reality in ballad verse, and is prevalent, though not altogether universal, in ballad music. In general terms compound rhythm means that stresses in the verse are not even and equal in their force, but that they fall with greater and weaker force in an alternating fashion. In reality it is incorrect to suppose that a division of stress into two departments, the strong and the weak, tells the whole story about the various gradations of stress, either in music or poetry. The amount of force which goes into the speaking or singing of syllables is, as must be very clearly seen, infinitely variable. We actually have not only strong and weak stresses, but others in all conceivable degrees between these two ideal opposites. A scheme of notation, then, which marks only the strong and weak stresses is still, in spite of its superior accuracy as compared to the system so far employed, merely a sketch of the rhythmic pattern again, though this time better filled in.

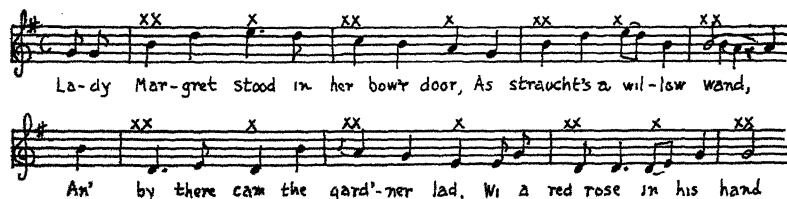
Now it is possible to contrive a system of notation which will give a fairly complete account of everything heard or felt in the verse by a given reader. Such a method must observe a number of subtle gradations of stress, the pitch of the voice in reading, elements such as rubato, and so on. Such methods have been tried, but I believe unsuccessfully on the whole. There are two serious difficulties in the way. First, the notation tends to become so complicated that a great deal of practice and experience with it is required to enable a reader to get beyond the point of bewilderment. Then, when all the facts of reading embraced by such a scheme are set down, the notation is sure to lose general value, for it represents many things which different readers must perforce interpret in different ways. For general purposes, the best system is one which actually goes no farther than a sketch or outline, for this presents the essential facts and does not infringe upon the individuality of any one's reading. It gives, in other words, only facts which are true for any good or acceptable reading. I shall, for these reasons, simplify all stresses into the two groups, strong and weak, and the reader must bear in mind that this modus operandi does not pretend to completeness, much less delicacy. But it is probably the best we can do without the assistance of oral communication.

#### ALTERNATION OF STRESS

The Gardener  
Greig, No. LXXa, p. 157.



The reader may have noticed already that the compound rhythm of folk-song is generally indicated by the double time in the measures of the musical notation. In the above stanza, the simple stress pattern of the CM<sup>11</sup> is 4.3.4.3. and these stresses are marked both in melody and poetry by the superscript X. Now in singing, as the musical score indicates, the stronger accents come at the beginning of the measures, the weaker ones in the middle.<sup>12</sup> That is, the first beat of each four-beat measure is strongly stressed, in this pattern, while the third beat of the measure, though stressed, is not stressed so heavily (1 2 3 4). We may call these strong and weak stresses primary and secondary respectively. I shall hereafter mark the primary stresses by XX and allow X to mark the others, as follows.



### INVERSION OF STRESS

A fact of great importance is illustrated in the first measure of this melody. In singing, it is plain that the stress pattern falls into a regular scheme of alternation, just as the musical barring indicates.

XX	X	XX	X	XX	X	XX
XX	X	XX	X	XX	X	XX

This pattern is a reality because prevailingly its measures are so arranged in their scheme of accentuation. But this does

<sup>11</sup>

The repeated line of the actual stanza is omitted here for convenience. As recorded the stanza is in the form 4.3.4.3.4.3.

<sup>12</sup>

The medial stress of the measure does not always fall exactly in mid-measure; it never does so in 3/2 and 5/4 time. Cf. p. 133 ff.

not mean that all measures are exactly alike. In singing the first measure it appears that the word stood is really stressed a little more than the syllable Mar- at the beginning of the measure and in the position where primary stress normally occurs. Stood is, of course, really stressed very strongly. There is no illusion about it. There are clear reasons for it, too. First, in the sense of the language it is an important word, naturally accented as spoken, and accented forcibly. When the sentence is sung, the tendency of the singer is to accent the word in the same way in expressing the thought of his sentence. Secondly, the note involved is relatively high in pitch and relatively prolonged, both of which facts in music work toward accentuation. Added together, these factors combine actually to produce such a strong secondary stress here that its title as secondary is really only nominal in its own measure.

It must be carefully noticed, however, that, in terms of the whole pattern, the stress of this word remains secondary nevertheless. It constitutes but an exception to an established structure of alternation. Under its irregularity, the foundation scheme remains unchanged and unaffected. And this is felt, of course, all the time in the singing. This momentary aberration from the regular rhythmic pulse does not disturb the pulse itself nor our feeling of it, which is the same thing. The foundation of rhythm is regularity. But without variations in the superstructure, rhythm becomes a very monotonous thing. Such variations exist in abundance in ballad song and poetry, and much of the pleasing effect of the rhythm depends upon them. The phenomenon just observed we may call inversion of stress. It is thoroughly characteristic of balladry, though, strangely enough, it has received almost no critical recognition.

Frequently there is a tendency toward inversion which is not strong enough actually to produce it, though the force of the tendency is felt. In the third measure of the song above is such a situation. Elevation of pitch makes for a strong accent on syllable wil. But the inherent weight of the primary stress on straucht's couples with the natural sense-accent of that word to emphasize its force very strongly, so strongly that in the singing it has greater stress than wil, or at least about an equal amount. These examples show how music and language sometimes assist each other and sometimes vie with one another in the establishment of the stress. Later illustrations will show this in clearer detail.

We must now turn to the poetic text of the song under inspection. Read with due recognition of its compound rhythm, it appears somewhat as follows:<sup>13</sup>

13

Another possible arrangement of measures, closer to that of the music, is the following, with the primary accent thrown upon her, rather than upon bow'r.

Lady||Mārgret|stōod in||hēr bow'r|dōor, as||strāucht's a||wallow|wānd |<sup>(u)</sup>  
 And||bý there|cām the||gārd'ner|lād, wā a||rēd rose in his||hānd. |<sup>(x)</sup>

In this connection the syncopation of rose, in both poetic versions, should

Lady<sup>xx</sup> Margaret stood in her<sup>x</sup> bow'r<sup>xx</sup> door, as<sup>x</sup> strau<sup>xx</sup>cht's a willow<sup>xx</sup> wand, (x)  
 And by there can the<sup>xx</sup> gard'ner<sup>x</sup> lad, wi' a<sup>x</sup> red rose in his<sup>xx</sup> hand. | x

The double bars mark the boundaries of the double measures and the position of the primary stress. I have included all of the bars, however, to mark both simple and compound rhythm. Based on the simple rhythm, the time signature would be 3/8. But in double time, the signature is 6/8, and the mid-measure bars could be eliminated, as they are in the notation of music, if we wished to do so:

6/8 Lady<sup>x(x)</sup> Margaret stood in her<sup>x(x)</sup> bow'r<sup>x(x)</sup> door, as<sup>xx</sup> strau<sup>x</sup>cht's a willow<sup>xx</sup> wand, x  
 And by there can the<sup>xx</sup> gard'ner<sup>x</sup> lad, wi' a<sup>x</sup> red rose in his<sup>xx</sup> hand. x

In the song form of this stanza we noticed two measures in which the pattern of alternating stress involved variation in the form of stress inversion, or the tendency toward it. The lines of the abstracted poetry, now spoken and not sung, lose the direct influence of the musical stresses, and, unhindered by their own principles of metrical speech, fall into different irregularities than they had in the company of the melody. The first two double measures of the first line both show a strong tendency toward inverted stress,<sup>14</sup> as in the musical form; but the tendency toward inversion in the sixth simple measure<sup>15</sup> (which be noticed. It happens that rose is similarly syncopated in the music. But even if this were not the case, I should read it so in the poetry nevertheless, for poetic reasons. These alternatives and possibilities I mention in further illustration of the principle of arrangement explained in the earlier section, i. e. that in the fixing of poetic stress both melody and poetry should, if possible, be allowed to lend a hand.

14

Whether the syllables stood, door are actually stressed more forcefully than Mar-, bow'r (i. e. whether inversion is clearly established) in this poetic line is a delicate matter, and, it appears to me, an optional one. I have asked for the opinions of a number of capable readers concerning it, and the prevailing opinion favors the inversion, though some readers prefer the accentuation corresponding to the basic pattern. The difference of competent opinion illustrates the futility of attempting to legislate a "correct" reading of any poetic line where correctness entails the relative accentual force of each particular syllable. The general pattern of the compound rhythm I have found to be the true common denominator of individual rhythmic interpretation. Over and above that sine qua non of the poetic stanza no two readings are ever quite alike in the rhythmic sense, and often are distinctly different, in some lines, as regards the selective order of strong and weak stresses. But there is never any disagreement about the primary stresses of syllables upon whose strong accentuation the real pattern depends. For instance, the word wand, a key word in the above stanza, must be strongly stressed, or the line would sink into something like rhythmic chaos. A rigid and substantial rhythmic skeleton must always somehow be expressed, of course, in a good reading of any poetic stanza. The dividing line between metrical liberty and anarchy may be drawn subtly and ingeniously, but it must always nevertheless be drawn strongly and unmistakably.

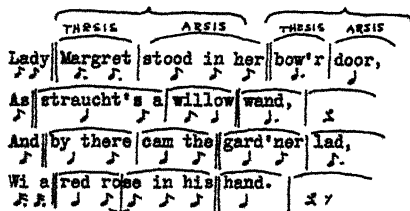
15

That is, on the syllable wil- of willow.

was caused by musical stress) can now no longer be detected at all, since the music is out of active competition in governing the accentuation. And whereas the second line of the song-stanza shows no inversion at all nor any approach to it, the text-line does contain a real inversion, on the word rose. Here the principle of sense-accent plays a leading rôle, and does it under interesting collateral circumstances. Let us look closely at the measure. We cannot accent red more forcibly than rose unless we mean to emphasize the idea of redness, as opposed to the idea of the rose itself. But such is clearly not the meaning of the sentence. To keep the meaning clear it is necessary and natural to throw relatively greater stress on rose. Thus the order of stresses becomes inverted. Furthermore, the secondary metrical stress, based on the timing of the measure and its syllabic contents, strikes somewhere in the interior of the word, not exactly upon its beginning -- at least in my own reading of the line. The two component principles of stress acting together upon the rhythmizing of the word are thus seen to effect considerable irregularity in reference to the basic pattern, though in doing so they merely augment the variety achieved within the limits of that pattern, and in no sense disturb its fundamentally regular structure.

## STRONG AND WEAK BEGINNING

The stanza we have been studying is in CM. In this pattern the fourth primary stress in each long line is vitally important to the rhythmic structure, and so is the rest which always follows it. This, in its consequences, is a rather important matter. It can best be explained by setting down the stanza, for convenience, in quatrain form.



The double measures in the stanza above are divided into two parts by the single bar in the middle of each. Thus the first half of the double measure contains the primary stress, the second half the secondary stress. We may call these parts of the double measure the thesis and arsis respectively.<sup>16</sup> I have labelled the diagram above to indicate this clearly. In marking the primary and secondary stresses, be it carefully noted, I am following the fundamental rhythmic pattern of the stanza, not the effects of inversion. The latter we may, for the present,

16

In using these terms I am following the usage of Professor Groll in The Rhythm of English Verse. Cf. this work p. 22 ff.

take for granted in the reading.

Now whenever stress inversion occurs, the strongest stress comes in the arsis of the double measure. But in CM, no matter where else this may happen, it cannot in any case happen in the final double measures of the second and fourth short lines, for there are no syllables in the arsis of these measures to receive the stress. Rests are there instead. To throw a strong stress on the rest would destroy the rhythmic feeling of the whole stanza, if such a psychological feat could be executed at all. Consequently, in all cases, heavy stress in these double measures falls upon the syllable in the thesis of it. This always reestablishes the basic scheme of alternation in the form strong, weak, strong, weak, strong, weak, strong, whether previous instances of inversion have been present in the verses or not, for we do not, and cannot, feel two different rhythmic movements to be fundamental in the stanza simultaneously. Such a feeling, if present, would bring rhythmic organization to ruin.

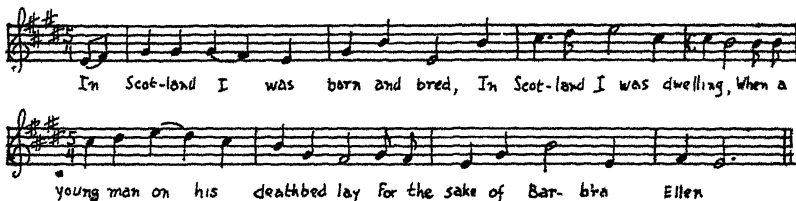
This alternating pattern, whose lines begin with a strong stress, we may describe as having strong beginning. If the rests in the arsis of the fourth and eighth double measures were filled with syllables, inversion might attain such prevalence as to change the whole pattern into that of the weak beginning, whose alternating stresses run weak, strong, weak, strong, etc. The measures are, of course, thus filled with syllables in LM, and LM stanzas are usually characterized by weak beginning in poetic form, though when this is true, it is not necessarily true of the music as well. In the CM stanza, however, whether in song or poetic form, the strong beginning is a constant. The following examples will show all of these facts more clearly.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS OF STRONG BEGINNING

The first example shows how the CM stanza, with its compound rhythm and strong beginning, fits an already familiar melody in five-time. In the song the arsis of the verse measure begins with the third beat of the musical measure. This adjustment of language to an asymmetrical time pattern is accomplished so neatly and successfully that it produces no sense of the extraordinary in its performance.

Barbara Ellen

Sharp, No. 7, p. 20. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



The musical barring marks the true pattern of compound rhythm and strong beginning. In the song, pitch and prolonga-

tion produce stress inversion, as I hear it, on syllable I in the third measure and on syllable on in the fifth. The language itself produces a tendency toward the same on syllable bred of the second measure. That the language is responsible for this stress will become clear if the poetry is read alone:

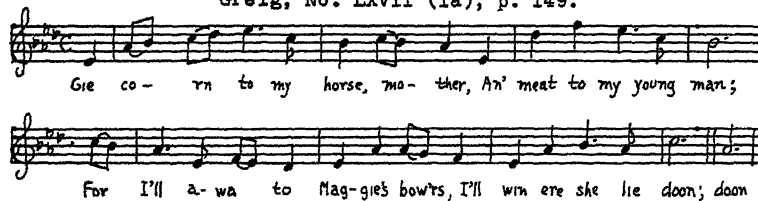
In||Scótlánd|I was||bórn and|bréd,  
 In||Scótlánd|I was||dwellíng, |  
 When a||yóúng mán on his||deáthbed|láy  
 For the||sáke of|Bar'bra||Élén. |

Here I am indicating the compound rhythmic pattern of the stanza only by the bars, and using the accent mark<sup>17</sup> to denote the stresses actually strongest in the reading. The poetic stanza is a fine example of variation superimposed on regularity, which is the essence of rhythmic reality in folk-song and folk-poetry. Here again it should be noticed that the stresses favored most in the poetic reading are not in every case the same as those most favored in the music. But, as always, they play their part in governing the singing. These are matters which call for close observation. Perhaps the reader will not, in all cases, hear the accents of music and language exactly as I do, but if he studies thoroughly the examples afforded, he must, I am sure, be convinced that the general principles I am endeavoring to illustrate here are real ones and quite independent of individual interpretation. Let the reader at this point, if he wishes to do so, make his own readings of the material and draw his own conclusions.

In the next example, the melody plainly forces inverted stress upon to in the first measure and wrenched accent upon mother in the second.

#### Clyde's Water

Greig, No. LXVII (1a), p. 149.



Gie co - rn to my horse, ma - ther, An' meat to my young man;  
 For I'll a - wa to Mag-gie's bow'rs, I'll win ere she lie doon; doon

17

Having understood clearly the distinction between strong and weak stresses, it will no longer be necessary in scansion to designate each accented syllable of a given measure as belonging either to one or the other type. As has been said, many other degrees of stress exist. For practical purposes we may begin at this point to mark out the rhythmic pattern by the bars alone (as in the stanza above) and use the symbol / to denote fairly heavy stress on any given syllable. Often it is very hard to distinguish, in a given measure, which of the two stresses is really the stronger, and the employment of this technic of representation will avoid the undesirable necessity of always doing so.



Neither of these features, I think, belong properly to the poetry alone. The first long line of verse reads most naturally in this way:

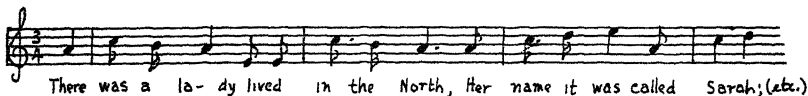
Gie||c<sup>o</sup>rn|to my||h<sup>o</sup>rse,|mother, an'|meat to|my young||m<sup>a</sup>n; | x

In the example to follow, the contrary thing happens. Here the poetry of the first short line favors inversion of stress in both of its double measures:

There||was a|lady||lived in the|N<sup>o</sup>rth

But in the song itself the music enforces a strict observation of the regular alternating pattern of compound rhythm.

The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow  
Greig, No. LXV(b), p. 143.



The next example shows a very interesting thing. The song is scored in simple time. Not infrequently ballads are so scored by collectors. Of course there is good reason for this. The present instance will explain the type. Here the short 3/4-measures of the melody are so clearly defined in their separate character that it would be improper to combine them into longer measures in the 6/4 (or perhaps the 6/8) signature. That is, the music is in simple, not compound, rhythm. But the poetry is in compound rhythm, of course, as can at once be verified by reading it. Furthermore, there is no doubt that in singing we tend to observe the character of this compound rhythm belonging to the metrical language. But its real effect is somewhat neutralized by the failure of the musical rhythm to support it, and by the corresponding force of the music toward establishing its own principle of simple rhythm. Here is a curious equilibrium of forces pulling in opposite directions. What is the actual result in the rhythm of the song? Sharp has awarded the victory to the melody. His notation tacitly assumes that the song, as a whole, is sung in simple rhythm.

Henry Martin  
Sharp, No. 1, p. 1. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



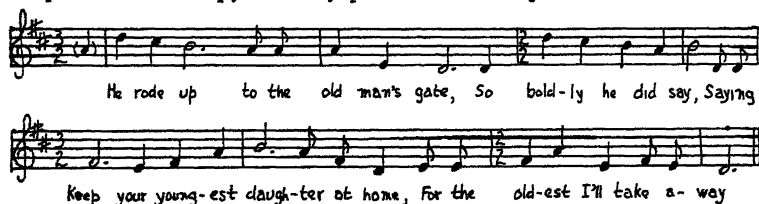


I believe that in the singing we really do favor the primary stresses of the poetic verses, though probably not enough to justify a change in the notation. In any case the compound rhythm of the poetry remains a fact, no matter what effect the peculiar quality of the melody set to it may have upon it.

A final example will show the common pattern of 3/2 time. Here compound rhythm is defined and maintained by the music in the song without inversion, though the poetry itself suggests at least two inversions of stress, on gate in the second measure, and on home in the fifth.

#### Earl Brand

Campbell and Sharp, No. 30, p. 12. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



#### ILLUSTRATIONS OF WEAK BEGINNING

I shall not attempt to derive general conclusions from these illustrations until songs and stanzas involving weak beginning have had their share of scrutiny. We have already seen that strong beginning is a constant in CM and why this is always necessarily true. Repeated in slightly different terms, as long as the heard stresses run in the order 4.3.4.3. in a set of measures arranged in the pattern 4.4.4.4. all possibility of weak beginning is precluded by the two rest measures.<sup>18</sup> But if syllables occur in these key positions, their heard stresses at once create a tendency toward reversal of thesis and arsis in the poetic double-measures. The usual, but not invariable, result is the weak beginning pattern in the poetry. Sometimes in the song, this is accompanied by an analogous pattern in the music, but at other times not. Consequently the real rhythm in the folk-song is often rather indeterminate with respect to its primary and secondary stresses, for when the poetry declares one scheme and the music asserts another simultaneously there is an unavoidable neutralization of definite rhythmic character. This

<sup>18</sup>

The same facts hold true no matter how CM is versified. See chapter on CM.

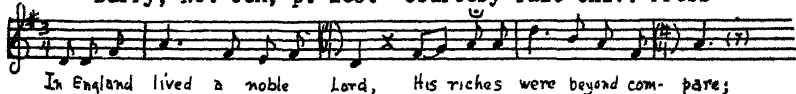
interesting phenomenon will presently be illustrated.

In connection with weak beginning one pertinent question naturally arises which might as well be faced at this juncture. The weak-strong order is the rule in LM and other stanza patterns in poetry wherein the measures are solidly filled with spoken syllables. Furthermore, in CM (where such order is a rhythmic impossibility) there is always a strong tendency toward it in the four-stress lines where syllables are found in each measure, this tendency showing itself in the stress inversion which is a stock feature of CM verse. This shows that in our unconscious feeling of rhythm we naturally favor a strong stress on the last heard syllable of a sequence. (The feminine ending does not contradict this principle, for it is conceived in terms of the stress preceding it, and functions like a grace-note in music, having no accental value of its own.) The principle holds equally well in music, the final note of the phrase or of the melody normally coming at the beginning of the measure and being strongly stressed. It is somehow felt that each stress must be followed by another stress to balance it, and that, correspondingly, each strong stress must be counterbalanced by another strong one. It is unnatural to end a rhythmic pattern on a weak stress. This principle will clearly account for the strong beginning of CM and also for the weak beginning of LM. In the former the third stress of the second and fourth short lines offers the last opportunity for a primary accent, since the final syllables of the lines occur in that position. This enforced mode of accentuation reflects upon the preceding short lines, and establishes throughout a basic strong-weak order, even though the final syllables in every line of the stanza should be strongly stressed.<sup>19</sup> In LM the final syllable of the last measure (not counting feminine endings) provides the final chance for a primary stress, and since the same thing happens regularly in all four lines of the stanza, the weak-strong order is firmly defined. In fact, if the whole question is deeply pondered, it will be seen that the strong beginning is, at bottom, only a convenient locution, but it is too useful to be abandoned. It has real value and meaning as we use it.

Let us now turn to the examples. The following one shows a LM stanza having weak beginning and set to a melody having the same thing. This can be readily verified by reading melody and poetry separately. Mr. Herzog has indicated the fact in the music by his barring.

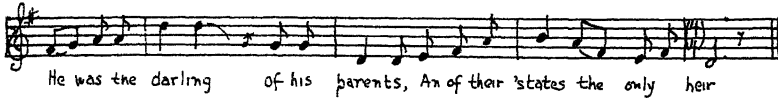
Lord Bateman

Barry, No. 53A, p. 106. Courtesy Yale Univ. Press



19

That is, the fourth stress in the first and third lines is strongly accented as a rule, though a variety of exceptions exists and is to be expected. In the second and fourth lines, however, there are no exceptions in the case of the final stress. It is always primary, and must be so to support the rhythmic structure of the stanza. It holds the crucial position.



The scansion to follow will show the facts of the poetry. I am indicating the basic pattern only by the bars, as was done above on several occasions, and denoting the stress emphasis heard in the superstructure of the rhythm by accent marks. Here, as everywhere in ballad poetry, the inversion of stress in all its variety is chiefly what lends the charm of rhythmic subtlety to the stanza, keeping its movement free from what would otherwise be a sing-song monotony.

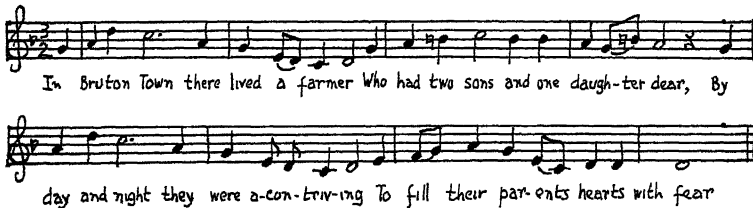
In|England||lived a|noble||Lórd,  
 His|ríches||were be-|yónd compáre,  
 He was the|dár|ling of his||párents  
 And of their||'states the|only||héir.

It is important to observe in this song that both melody and poetry coöperate to fix the pattern of weak beginning firmly in the singing of it. Whenever this joint assertion of rhythm is the case, the song pattern is clear in its weak-strong alternation of stress.

We may now see what happens when music in strong beginning is set to verse of the opposite scheme. Here an equilibrium of forces is reached such as appeared in the example of CM whose melody was conceived in simple rhythm.

#### Bruton Town

Sharp, No. 2, p. 4. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



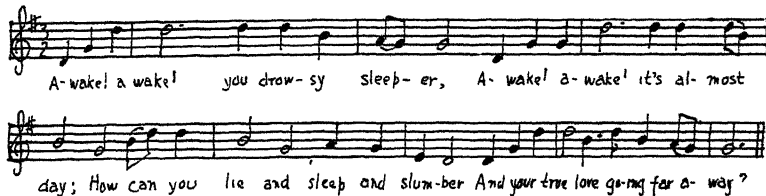
Here the music alone, as scored, is stressed most strongly in the positions where the weak stresses of the poetry occur. In the singing the poetic stresses make themselves felt, too, and are sometimes assisted, as in the first measure, by prolongation of the notes. What is the true rhythmic character of this song? Clearly the poetry has the weak beginning, and clearly, too, the accents at the beginning of the measures in the music operate to weaken its effect in the performance. The song, in fact, does not have a clearly marked pattern of alternation, though individual singers might show involuntary partiality to either

possible order in the expression of the singing. It is probable, I think, that most singers would slightly favor the weak-strong order, in spite of the conventions of the notation.

But the measures of songs in  $3/2$  time are not always arranged in the way just seen. In the one to follow, the weak beginning is so clear both in melody and verse that the order is recognized in the barring, as it was in the stanza from Lord Bateman on page 154.

Awake! Awake!

Campbell and Sharp, No. 47A, p. 173. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons



On page 152 above we examined a song (Henry Martin) scored in simple ( $3/4$ ) time, and noted that the alternating character of its verse rhythm was not really transmitted to the song rhythm, for the reason that the simple stress pattern of the melody dominated it. Other instances of the same relationship are not hard to find. If, however, the melody gives even slight or occasional assistance to the primary stresses of the poetry in such songs, the effect in singing is actual observance of alternating stress, in spite of the single-time notation. Factors of pitch elevation may be influential here, as they are in the following example, where, in the performance, all of the syllables at the beginning of measures are not equal in degree of stress, though the signature is  $3/4$ . This song shows a decided leaning toward the alternating pattern of the weak beginning.

Mollie Vaunders

Cox, No. 102A, p. 529. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

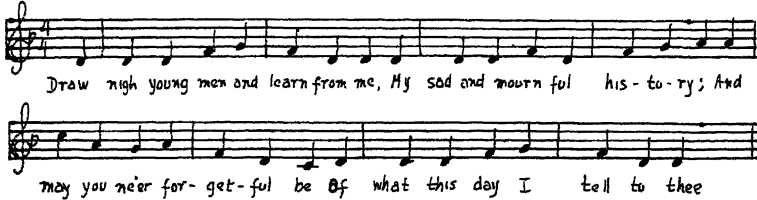


Weak beginning is the rule in the poetry of LM, but not invariably. The following song shows such a stanza in strong begin-

ning set to a tune of the same kind. The result is the unusual occurrence of a LM song in the strong beginning scheme:

McAfee's Confession

Cox, No. 37A, p. 525. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press



CONCLUSIONS

We have, I think, examined a sufficient number of examples, in both schemes of alternation to draw some general conclusions about the facts of compound rhythm in ballad song and its poetry. First, as to the songs:

1. Ballad song may exist in simple or in compound rhythm, the latter being the rule and recognized generally in notation by double-time signatures.

2. Songs in compound rhythm may show strong beginning or weak beginning or be so indeterminate that either mode of singing is possible.

3. Whether the song be in simple or compound rhythm, whether weak-strong or strong-weak in stress alternation, its rhythmic configuration is determined neither by melody nor poetry alone, but by both together in active process of mutual coöperation or resistance.

4. When the natural rhythmic schemes of poetry and music are at variance, the music sometimes, by its strength of definition establishes the pattern. In other cases, the language may impose its pattern upon a divergent scheme in the music. Which of these is true in a given song is often a delicate matter of interpretation.

5. Sometimes divergent orders of alternation in melody and poetry are both so strongly felt that all feeling of alternation is greatly weakened and perhaps completely neutralized.

6. Instances of stress inversion are common, and when they occur they may be caused by either the language or the melody alone, or by both assisting each other.

The following conclusions may be drawn up in reference to the poetic texts:

1. Stanzas may have either the pattern of strong beginning or that of weak beginning. The former is universal in CM. The latter is the rule in LM.

2. Alternating stress and the order which it assumes is inherent in the metrical language of the stanza and governed by its laws. Once read apart from the music, the latter obviously takes no active part in the determination of stress, though it may, in a historical sense, have done so in the evolution of the

song. In this connection, however, it must be observed that simple rhythm is not uncommon in melody, while it is unknown in ballad verse. The fact points to the conclusion that the nature of metrical language must, in the historical development of folk-song, have played a very important if not dominant rôle in the evolution of its characteristic stress patterns.

3. Both the strong beginning and the weak beginning and their respective prevalence in CM and LM can be explained on the principle that the sense of rhythm naturally tends to balance one stress with another and to terminate a series of stresses on a strong emphasis.

A further word should be added about the foregoing facts in their application to stanza forms (and their songs) not belonging to CM and LM. The differences prevailing between these less usual forms and those just discussed are, for the most part, differences simply of versification. This has doubtless been clearly seen in the chapters in which stanza forms were analyzed and compared. That is, the rhythmic facts of the verses in CM and LM are true for most other stanzas in balladry, for the other stanzas are generally made of the same verse-material. Lines of four simple stresses, or of three, or of seven, combined in various ways together, make up nearly all ballad verse, and what has been observed already in this chapter applies to analogous forms no matter how they are put together in the construction of odd stanzas.

The stanza of Sharp's Lord Rendal will, perhaps, show the justice of the latter assertion as well as any which might be selected. This is a pattern of melody and verse extraordinarily elaborate for a ballad. Far from having a sustained and homogeneous rhythmic character from start to finish, it is remarkably varied. Three different rhythmic movements may be seen in its structure.

#### Lord Rendal

Sharp, No. 18, p. 44. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.

Where have you been all the day, Ren-dal my son? Where have you been all the day, my pret ty one? I've  
been to my Sweet-heart, mother, I've been to my Sweet heart, mother -  
make my bed soon, For I'm sick to my heart, and I fain would lie down

The first movement runs through the first four measures. The primary stresses come, as the scoring shows, on the initial syllables of the measures. A new movement begins in the fifth melodic measure, running through and including the eighth. In

dimensions these measures are the same as are the opening four. But the rhythm shows an abrupt contrast. The syllable been, an important word in the sense of the language is placed in the initial position in its measure, and set to a prolonged note as well. All three factors combine to fasten upon this syllable a primary stress of extraordinary power. This is true in the first and third measures of the movement. In the other measures, the first syllable of mother is stressed by virtue of its position in the pattern, but doubly so because of the contrasting effect of the rest which immediately follows it. These accentual peculiarities mark the second movement of the song as strikingly different from the first. However, it can be seen that the text-lines of the first movement are in the four-stress pattern, while those of the second are in the three-stress pattern, so that the verse-material of the stanza so far is not different from that found in CM.

The final movement, however, presents something quite out of the ordinary. It is different from either preceding sector of the song. Even the time signature shifts. This movement, whether you choose to regard it as a continuous line or a set of three lines, is divided into three analogous parts. Each part contains two rhythmic stresses in the order weak-strong, though in the first two measures the primary stress comes in mid-measure. In the third and last measure, the editor has made a division, setting down the final syllable, with its strong accent, at the beginning of a new 4/4 measure, the latter being arranged, with its accompaniment, as an introduction to a following stanza of the song. If we regard the verses of this final movement as three in number (and the phrasing surely will allow that interpretation) it appears that compound rhythm is an active principle in the shortest verse forms of balladry.

As a result of studying the stresses of ballad song and poetry at considerable length, I am ready to venture the opinion that compound rhythm (or, if you prefer, dipodic structure) is an inherent principle in the ballad poetry of the English tradition, that it belongs by nature more to the language than to the music, its prevalence in ballad music probably resulting from the rhythmic patterns of the language with which the music has been associated in its development.

#### TYPES OF MEASURE

Ballad rhythm, like all other complex integrations, attains its real form at the top of what the analyst may properly regard as an ascending series of organizations. At the peak is the complete rhythmic structure. At the bottom are the individual units. The smallest elements in this intricately interrelated structure cannot be understood without knowledge of the larger. Nor can the larger units be completely comprehended without an insight into the nature of the smaller ones. But everything cannot be studied together. I have therefore tried to simplify the analysis as far as possible by starting from one pole and moving in the general direction of the other. We have studied stanza and melody as units, then verse and phrase,



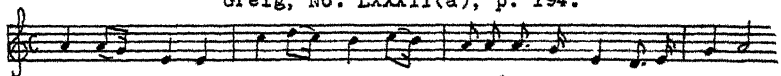
then simple and compound rhythm within verses and phrases. We now reach the smallest rhythmic integers of all, the ultimate metrical beats which, in their relations with notes and syllables, give character and pattern to the individual measures containing them.

Just as the stanza or melody has a pattern of verses or phrases, and just as the verse or phrase has a pattern of measures, so the measures themselves, either in melody or verse, have patterns of beats within themselves. The measure is the primary integration. As to the musical measures in ballad song, little need be said here. Ballad music, in principle, is like any other music. The examples provided earlier in the chapter will show the organization of the musical beats into measures in all of the characteristic time-patterns of recorded folk-song. This is a matter of elementary musical grammar which need not be elaborated upon. Our primary concern now is with the rhythmic patterns in the measures of the poetic text, for very little attention has been given to this phase of ballad structure.

At the outset it should be remembered that the division of the poetic line into its measures is, in the end, as explained earlier in the chapter, a matter of the poetry rather than of the music, though the musical measures often prove serviceable as guides when rhythmizing of the verses offers difficulties, as it sometimes does. That is to say, the melody can often supply the feeling of the true rhythm when it is hard to discover in a given poetic stanza. But, as noted above, the song-verse is often at variance with the text-verse regarding the exact allocation of syllables within the different measures, especially where wrenched accent is involved. (Cf. page 128 ff.) In exceptional cases the musical setting must even be guarded against, for sometimes (though rarely) the musical measures do not correspond to any proper metrical division of the text-verse. This is true in the following instance:

The Rantin Laddie

Greig, No. LXXXII(a), p. 194.



I will raise five hun-dred men, An' that will mak a com pa ny bon nie,



An' I'll mount them a' on milk-white steeds, To bring home my bon nie ran tin lassie

(4) | I will | raise five | hundred | men, (4)

(4) And | that will | mak a | company | bonnie, (4)

(4) An' I'll | mount them | a' on | milk-white | steeds, (4)

(4) To | bring home my | bonnie | rantin | lassie. (4)

The melody provides only three stresses in the second and

fourth verses. The text, following that arrangement, falls into the CM formulation, 4.3.4.3. but the text clearly belongs to the LM pattern, 4.4.4.4., and cannot be read very well in any other form. This is apparently a case where a melody developed with and for CM stanzas has been fitted with a set of verses not well adjusted to its shape, as appears from the crowding of words in the third and seventh measures of the song. The same melody appears four times elsewhere in Greig's collection, and is set to a CM stanza in each of these instances. (Cf. Greig, pp. 12, 70, 182, 136.)

But such a situation, as I say, is exceptional, and as a rule the music is helpful rather than deceptive as a guide to measure, for it ordinarily reveals clearly the ground rhythm upon which the metrical divisions of the poetry are properly based. (Cf. p. 127 ff.) Studied with judgment and discrimination, the music not infrequently leads to a metrical division of the poetic line which is not apparent in the poetry alone, but which should be carefully observed by any reader interested in preserving the true rhythmic values of the traditional song.

The utility of the music as a guide to metrical division has appeared incidentally at several points in preceding chapters,<sup>20</sup> but since the matter has not been expressly commented on, I shall add a concrete example here. Let us examine the following stanza from Greig, No. LXXXI(b), page 192.

Bethelnie, O Bethelnie,  
Ye shine where ye stand,  
May the heather bells around you  
Shine o'er Fyvie's land.

The words of the stanza might, perhaps, suggest a reading in the Short Meter form:

3/8	(3)	Bethelnie,   O Bethelnie,	x	(4)	Version A
	(3)	Ye   shine   where ye   stand,	x 7	(4)	
	(4)	May the   heather   bells around you		(4)	
	(3)	Shine o'er   Fyvie's   land.	x 7	(4)	

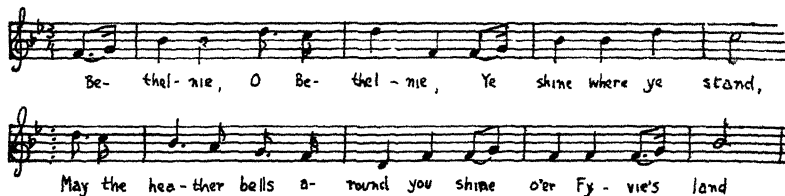
It is more likely, however, that the language of the stanza would suggest a quatrain of threes:

#### 20

A case in point appears on pages 95-96 above (Greig's Lizzie Lindsay). Here the long line of verse is divided into six measures on the basis of the musical rhythm. Without the music for reference, the poetry itself would suggest a long line of eight measures. The six-measure line, however, is the more truthful representation of the rhythmic movement of the song-stanza.

- 3/8 (3) Bethelnie, | O Bethelnie, | x (4) Version  
B  
(3) Ye | shine | where ye | stand, | 7 (4)  
(3) May the | heather | bells around you | x7 (4)  
(3) | Shine o'er | Fyvie's | land. | x7 (4)

But the song-stanza suggests neither of the above readings. It indicates clearly a couplet of four-stress lines whose measures are syllabized on a different plan:



#### Version C

- 3/4 (4) Bethelnie, O bethelnie, ye | shine where ye | stand, x (4)  
(4) May the | heather bells around you shine | o'er Fyvie's | land. x x

The differences between versions B and C are significant. In B the stresses fall on alternating syllables, producing a bisyllabic measure. Such a measure is suggested at once by the poetry alone, for the reason that the bisyllabic measure is the normal one in ballad poetry, and we are accustomed to follow it by habit. In version C, however, the stresses fall, as in the music, on every third syllable, producing a trisyllabic measure essentially like that of the folk-song. Clearly the latter form most accurately preserves the rhythmic movement of the song, and clearly it furnishes a good poetic stanza in the rhythmic sense. For this combination of reasons it is preferable to either of the others. The example will show the practicality and advisability of reference to the music not only for the purpose of fixing the stresses of the poetry at their proper points in the line, but also to indicate the internal syllabic pattern of the measures which result from doing so. Here in this stanza, for example, the difference in measure-pattern between versions B and C is an important one. It is the difference between a bisyllabic measure in rapid triple time and a trisyllabic measure in slower triple time. (The couplet versification of version C I am basing, of course, upon the melodic phraseology, though I have disregarded the repetition of the second long line, which forms the end refrain, as unnecessary to the point of the illustration.)

The determination of measure in stanzas not supplied with

melody is sometimes, in fact, rather puzzling. The prevailing measure-pattern of the ballad (which may also properly be called the true one) is not always obvious on the surface of a given stanza, and this is especially true of beginning stanzas, which, as a class, are peculiarly subject to minute irregularities. Consequently, in reading a ballad text, the reader is apt occasionally to be misled at the outset into an erroneous conception of its meter. Failing the guidance of the melodic measures, it is necessary in doubtful cases to read experimentally through several stanzas before the rhythmic impression made by the first one can be confirmed or refuted. Measure pattern in the first three stanzas of Child's Sheath and Knife (16A), for example, is so confusing that not until one reaches the fourth or fifth stanza (where the prevailing rhythm may be said to catch its stride) is it possible to feel any rhythmic coherence among the verses. I append the first five stanzas without scansion and following Child's typography.

- 1 It is talked the world all over,  
The brume blooms bonnie and says it is fair  
That the king's dochter gaes wi child to her brither.  
And we'll never gang down to the brume onie mair.
- 2 He's taen his sister down to her father's deer park,  
Wi his yew-tree bow and arrows fast slung to his back.
- 3 'Now when that ye hear me gie a loud cry,  
Shoot frae thy bow an arrow and there let me lye.
- 4 'And when that ye see I am lying dead,  
Then ye'll put me in a grave, wi a turf at my head.'
- 5 Now when he heard her gie a loud cry,  
His silver arrow frae his bow he suddenly let fly.  
Now they'll never, etc.

The reader of texts, however, must not fall into the error of attempting to discover metrical uniformity among stanzas where it does not exist, and in some ballads this is, without question, the case. Child's 29 is an instance. Compare the following:

- 1 In the|third day of|May  
to|Carleile did|come  
A kind|curteous|child,  
that cold|much of wisdome.
- 14 Shee|curst the|weauer|and the|walker  
that|clothe|that had|wrought,|  
And|bade a|vengeance|on his|crowne  
that|hither|hath itt|brought.

In the ballad a number of stanzas follow the first, and a number follow the latter, form. In some stanzas (e.g. the 25th)

the two forms are merged confusingly together. It is impossible to reconcile these patterns, for they differ distinctly not only in measure pattern but in verse pattern. The first type is trisyllabic in measure and has two measures to the verse. The second type is bisyllabic in measure and in CM form. Ballad texts like this one are not of a high poetic order, but neither are they numerous. They are best read, as I see it, by first recognizing in the text as many different types of stanza as seems strictly necessary, and then abiding by whatever abrupt shifts of metrical design happen to crop out in the actual reading; and it might be well to remember at the same time that it takes all kinds of ballads to make a traditional balladry.

#### THE BISYLLABIC MEASURE

"A rhythm is produced from that which is quick, and that which is slow, first being distinguished and opposed to each other, and then made accordant..."

Eryximachus in Plato's Symposium  
(as translated by Shelley)

There is some difference of opinion as to whether any English poetry really has, among its distinguishable features, such a thing as a discernible rhythmic pattern within the measure -- something, in other words, corresponding to what is designated by the time signature in music. This larger question has no part in our present discussion, and I shall leave to the student of general prosody any possible implications growing out of what is to follow here. That measure-pattern is a reality, and a plain reality, in ballad verse I have not the least doubt, and have, by constant use of the time signature in scansion, tacitly assumed it all along. I believe, however, that the forthcoming analysis will demonstrate the justice of the assumption.

Rhythmic pattern within the measure may be classified in two ways. First to be considered is the number of beats between the bars, this number providing the numerator of the time signature, as in music. In the second place, account must be taken of the characteristic number of syllables in the measure, for the prevailing mode in which the syllables are distributed over the underlying beats determines, in large measure, the final rhythmic effect. As will presently appear, quite different rhythmic movements are to be found in verses having the same time signature. In this respect the poetic measure is again analogous to the measure in music.

By far the most common time signature in ballad poetry is 3/8.<sup>21</sup> And by far the most prevalent type of measure having

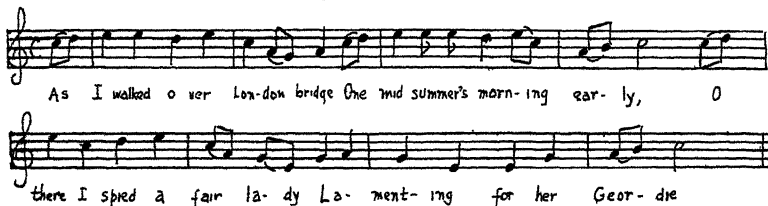
21

The eighth-note represents, very roughly, the short syllable of spoken language. Its selection as unit is, in a sense, arbitrary. But for the purpose of arithmetical utility it seems to represent the best possible selection. In its use I am following the authority of Professor Groll. (Cf. The Rhythm of English Verse, p. 2 ff.)

that signature is the bisyllabic measure, the latter being characteristic of perhaps three-quarters of all English ballads. Let us observe its qualities in an actual model:

As I Walked Over London Bridge

J.F.S.S., Vol. II, p. 208.



The measures in the music, as usual, are double ones. That is, they are based on the idea of compound rhythm, each measure containing a primary and secondary stress. Now it is possible to mark off the measures of the poetry in the same way (a practice I have followed once or twice in preceding pages), and, for some purposes, this method is doubtless preferable. But in the study of measure pattern we are concerned with both simple and double measures. Accordingly I shall follow, in the main, the scheme of notation already familiar, in which each simple measure is barred, the compound measures being indicated by the double bar. To show once more the justice of the double-measure notation, however, I shall set down the above stanza in that way here:

6/8	(4)	As   I walked over   London bridge	(4)
	(3)	One   midsummer's morning   early,	(4)
	(4)	O   there I spied a   fair lady	(4)
	(3)	Lamenting for her   Geordie.	(4)

The verse now follows a 6/8 pattern of time, though the music (as is very often the case in similar circumstances) is in common time. In the two systems of notation (music and verse) the time interval denoted by a given note is not, of course, precisely synchronous. But this disparity does not affect the fundamental character of the rhythm indicated by the time signatures. There is just as much distinction between 6/8 and 4/4 time, one referring to verse and the other to music, as there is between those signatures as applied only to music.

Set down in simple time, the stanza above may be arranged in this way:

3/8	(4)	As    I walked   over    London   bridge	(4)
	(3)	One    midsummer's   morning    early,   x	(4)

- (4) O||there I||spied a||fair lady|| (4)  
 (3) Lamenting||for her||Geordie. x (4)

This example of ballad meter is essentially like hundreds of others which could be cited. It shows a measure having three beats and prevaillingly two syllables -- a pattern common enough among the measures of ballad poetry to deserve the name of normal. The stanza may serve as a general example to illustrate the sort of relationship ordinarily prevailing between poetry and music in regard to the measure-pattern. As usual, the stress-patterns of phrase and verse coincide in a general way, for without such a parallelism of accentual systems the folk-song could not be rhythmized in any acceptable way. The juncture of stress systems results, of course, in a corresponding congruity of measure boundaries. But at this point all precise analogical duplication may be said to come to an end. In the matter of time signature, correspondence either does not exist or is quite vague and remote. In this song, for instance, the music is in duple, while the poetry is in triple time. In this matter music and poetry set their own standards and abide by their own laws as separate arts, but when joined in song, the music sets the pattern.

In comparison with the poetry, the music shows a much wider range of time-pattern, and this, I suppose, is to be expected. Language, including metrical language, deals, in the main, with sequences of relatively longer and shorter syllables. In juxtaposition these longer and shorter syllables apparently group themselves more easily and naturally into triplicate than into duplicate patterns. The figures  $\text{♪♪}$  and  $\text{♪♪♪}$  are more prevalent than the figures  $\text{♪♪♪}$  or  $\text{♪♪}$ , though the latter are not uncommon. It is the former, however, which most often predominate in a text-verse and establish the syllabic figure whose movement of beats is represented in the time signature. One must remember that the time signature implies only a characteristic rhythmic movement of syllables, and is seldom authorized with equal emphasis by all of the measures in a given verse, much less a whole stanza.

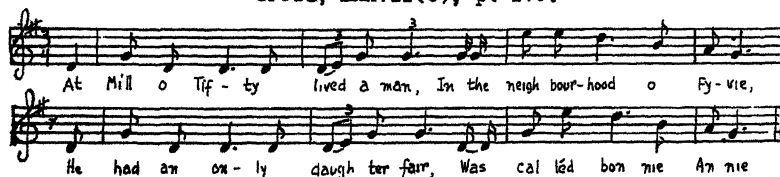
Compared with the natural syllabic figures of ballad verse, as spoken, the musical measures show a significant difference. There is no reason why they cannot, for example, be arranged in figures allowing equal time to each note. This is the situation in the first measure of the song above. And music is free to employ many other patterns more or less at variance with the syllabic tendencies of poetry. It is, then, as I have said, to be expected that the time signatures of melody and verse in a given song will be most often different from each other. As long as the poetry is part of the song, it can rightly be said to have no time-pattern of its own. That pattern is something which it assumes only in its spoken form, when free from the strict government of the music.

The following examples show  $3/8$  time (noted in terms of simple measure) in ballad verse in connection with several differ-

ent kinds of musical time. The first tune is given the  $\frac{3}{4}$  signature, which in music is a general indication of simple time. But here it marks double time because of the number of word syllables (and corresponding notes) included in the measures. Each measure contains both primary and secondary stress. As in one variety of  $\frac{3}{2}$  time (cf. Bruton Town, page 133 above) the secondary stresses do not fall on the fourth beat (which would divide the measure accentually into two equal parts) but on the beat just before it. This feature is what gives the song its peculiar quality of rhythm, but it has no bearing on the reading of the poetry alone.

Tifty's Annie

Greig, LXXVII(3), p. 179.



- |     |     |  |     |
|-----|-----|--|-----|
| 3/2 | (4) | At   Mill o   Tif-ty    lived a man,       | (4) |
|     | (3) | In the    neighbour-hood o    Fy-vie,   x  | (4) |
|     | (4) | He    had an    only    daugh-ter    fair, | (4) |
|     | (3) | Was    called    Bonnie    Annie.   x r    | (4) |

Ballad verse in  $\frac{3}{8}$  time very seldom shows complete uniformity of bisyllabic measures. The movement is usually varied by occasional trisyllabic and monosyllabic measures. The latter, when they occur, usually do so at the end of a verse, especially the short second and fourth verses of CM. Furthermore, in measures of two syllables, the order is often varied from the prevailing figure  $\text{♪♪}$  to the balanced division  $\text{♪♪}$ . Often, too, syn-copation is present in the line. All of these varieties preserve the measures from monotony and, in their subtle affilia-tions with the sense-expression of the language, sustain an effect of ease and naturalness within the limits of the estab-lished pattern. The following stanza will exhibit some of these features, and will show also the prevailing triple move-ment of beats underlying the long and short syllables of the measures by virtue of which the  $\frac{3}{8}$  signature is derived. This movement is especially well defined in the final line.

The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington

J.F.S.S., Vol. I, p. 125.

(Continued on next page)



- $\frac{3}{8}$  (4) || There was a youth and a well-loved youth,  $\gamma$  (4)  
 (3) He was a squire's son; | x (4)  
 (4) And he loved the bailiff's daughter dear (4)  
 (3) That lived at Islington. | x r (4)

## THE TRISYLLABIC MEASURE

The folk-song volumes show a small but considerable number of ballads whose measures are prevailingly in the trisyllabic form. Such texts are usually in  $\frac{3}{8}$  time.<sup>22</sup> This is also the usual signature in the bisyllabic measure, as we have seen. In the two types of measure, in fact, the triple movement of underlying beats is identical, and this fact helps to explain why trisyllabic measures are often interspersed among the prevailingly bisyllabic measures of a given verse. The distinction between the types, of course, consists in the characteristic way in which the syllables are distributed over the beats. And this makes a great deal of difference, not only in the movement of the poetic measure, but in the relation of the poetic to the musical measure. In the trisyllabic measure the stress comes regularly on every third syllable. The beats and syllables, in other words, coincide, and this relatively rigid organization renders this measure less flexible than the bisyllabic in its adjustability to various musical time-patterns. The trisyllabic measure is not easily adaptable rhythmically to any music whose simple measures are in duple time. The reader may put this matter to the test by attempting to arrange the following stanza from The Brown Girl to the music of The False Lover Won Back, on page 128. Texts having this form of measure, as a matter of fact, are generally set to tunes in  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{6}{8}$  time.<sup>23</sup> Either in song form or poetry the triple movement of this measure is striking, though its picturesque cantering quality is particularly noticeable in the verse. I add two examples whose musical accompaniments show different varieties of triple time. The first stanza is in LM. This is the characteristic stanza form associated with the pattern. CM stanzas involving it are rare. The second example, however, is such a one. The pattern is characteristic among the variants of Lord Randal (Child 12), and Lamkin (Child 93).

<sup>22</sup>

The  $\frac{3}{4}$  signature is sometimes, though rarely, indicated. See the example on page 162.

<sup>23</sup>

But it should be remembered here that the bisyllabic measure, also in the  $\frac{3}{8}$  signature, is often set to music in duple time, as shown before. In the musical setting the number of syllables to the measure is an important matter, whereas the time-pattern which these syllables assume in the separate form of spoken verse is not an important matter.

The Brown Girl

Campbell and Sharp, No. 36A, p. 145. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

There was a rich lady, from Eng-land she came, Fine Sal-ly, fine  
Sal-ly, Fine Sal-ly by name, And she had more mo-ney — than the  
king could pos-sess, And her wit and her beau-ty was worth all the rest

- 3/8 (4) There|was a rich|lady, from|England she|came, (4)  
 (4) Fine|Sally, fine|Sally, fine|Sally by|name, (4)  
 (4) And|she had more|money than the|king could pos-sess, (4)  
 (4) And her|wit and her|beauty was|worth all the|rest. (4)

Robin Hood and Arthur O'Bland

Davis, No. 31, p. 586. Courtesy Harvard Univ Press

When Phoebus had melt-ed the shackles of ice And like-wise the mountains of snow,  
Bold Rob in Hood, that archer so good, Went frolicking abroad with his bow

- 3/8 (4) When|Phoebus had|melted the|shackles of|ice (4)  
 (3) And|likewise the|mountains of|snow, 7 | x7 (4)  
 (4) Bold|Robin Hood, that|archer so|good, (4)  
 (3) Went|frolicking abroad with his|bow. 7 | x7 (4)

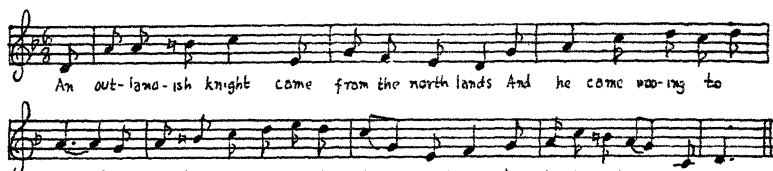
These examples will illustrate (if it has not been noticed before) the considerable differences of rhythmic movement among verses and stanzas to which heretofore we have been applying indiscriminately the same names, e.g. four-stress verse, Common Meter, and so on.

The illustrations exhibit rather pure types of the ballad in trisyllabic measure. It often happens when a text is set to triple time in music, which allows either duple or triple syllabication in the verse measure, that both of these forms are

present. Either one or the other may predominate, though sometimes the patterns are so evenly distributed that a "real form" is hard to decide upon. The following stanza contains both kinds of measure, though the trisyllabic, perhaps, is slightly predominant.

The Outlandish Knight

Sharp, No. 11, p. 29. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.



An out-land-ish knight came from the north lands And he came woo-ing to me; He said he would take me to for-eign lands, And there he would marry me

3/8 (4) An outlandish knight came from the north lands, (4)

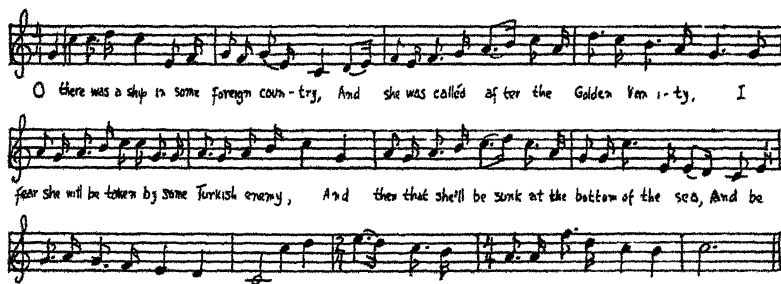
(3) And he came wooing to me, 7 x (4)

(4) He said he would take me to foreign lands, (4)

(3) And there he would marry me. 7 x (4)

THE QUADRISYLLABIC MEASURE

A third measure-pattern not uncommon among ballads is that whose movement is based on the conception of four beats, indicated by the time signature 4/8. Such measures frequently contain four syllables of equal length, and since this feature is peculiar to the type, I have named it accordingly. But in all stanzas belonging to the type, measures containing three syllables (of unequal length) are found, so that the name must be accepted with that reservation in mind. When three-syllable measures occur in 4/8 time, however, the movement, as the signature denotes, is always duple and never triple. Sharp's The Golden Vanity, already familiar, is as good an example of this pattern as may be found. (Sharp, No. 14, p. 36. Courtesy Oliver Ditson Co.)



O there was a ship in some foreign coun-try, And she was called af-ter the Golden Van-ty, I fear she will be taken by some Turkish enemy, And then that she'll be sunk at the bottom of the sea, And be sunk all in the low lands low, Low lands low and be sunk all in the low lands low

The verses of this stanza contain so many syllables that, in the analysis of its rhythm, three stages, instead of the usual two, must be distinguished. Let us take the third verse for example. It shows the point in question most clearly, though of course the facts apply generally to the verses. The line contains seven heard stresses in its simplest rhythmic form:

I | fear she | will be | taken | by some | Turkish | ene- | my

Observing the alternating stronger stresses, and marking them by the double bar, the line appears in this way:

I || fear she | will be || taken | by some || Turkish | ene- || my

When the reading is closely examined, however, it is clear that the compound rhythm here indicated must be recompounded to represent the real facts of poetic performance. I use the triple bar for this purpose.

I ||| fear she | will be ||| taken | by some ||| Turkish | ene- ||| my

What we have here is evidently a weak-beginning verse involving doubly compounded rhythm. For practical purposes of scansion, however, we may disregard the first, or simplest, rhythmic stage, and represent the verse as follows:

4/8 I | fear she will be || taken by some | Turkish ene- || my  
 ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ ||

The reader may perhaps be wondering why I have set these measures down in 4/8 rather than in 6/8 time. It is because, in the scale being used, the 6/8 notation would indicate too slow a movement. Thus recorded, each measure would require half again as much time in the reading. This would falsify the true tempo, for the verse has a quick movement, the most rapid one, in fact, that I have found in ballad poetry. It must be granted that in measures like the first one there is a tendency in reading to allow slightly more time-value to the stressed syllables, fear and will. But when the verse is read in a natural way and up to tempo, this tendency is so slight that the notation being used does not seriously misrepresent it. This is another case among many, in the notation both of music and verse, where no perfect graph of conditions can be satisfactorily worked out for use. Here is the scansion of the whole stanza as I make it out:

4/8 (4)	O   there was a   ship in some   foreign coun-    try ,	(4)
(4)	And   she was called   after the   Golden Vani-    ty ,	(4)
(4)	I   fear she will be    taken by some   Turkish ene-    my ,	(4)
(4)	And   then that she'll be    sunk at the   bottom of the    sea ,	(4)
(4)	And be   sunk all in the   Lowlands   Low,   Lowlands	(4)
(4)	Low, and be    sunk all in the   Lowlands   Low .	(4)

It will be seen that the music contains a shortened measure near the final cadence. This peculiarity results in a very striking subtlety in the pattern of the verse. The fifth line abruptly reverses the weak-strong order of stress, and involves two emphatic inversions upon the underlying syllables. But it usually happens, in simpler stanzas than this one where the primary stresses are not so radically involved, that irregular time in the music makes no difference at all in the rhythm of the measures in the verse. (Cf. page 134 ff. above.)

A less complicated stanza in the same pattern is the following:

Jack Went A-Sailing

Campbell and Sharp, No. 55A, p. 189. Courtesy G.P. Putnam's Sons

Jack went a-sailing With trouble on his mind, To  
leave his na-tive coun-try And his dar-ling dear be  
hind Sing ree and sing low, So fare you well, my dear

4/8 (4) | Jack went a-sailing with | trouble on his | mind, , (4)  
(4) To | leave his native | country and his | darling dear behind. (4)  
(4) Sing | ree and sing | low, So | fare you well, my | dear. x (4)

Very few ballad texts are on record which are not based upon the metrical conceptions so far shown,<sup>24</sup> though now and again one runs across a strikingly individual variation of figure, as can be seen in the following example -- a variety of the quadri-syllabic formula:

Ye Sons of Columbia

Cox, No. 45, p. 525. Courtesy Harvard Univ. Press

Ye he-roes of Co-lum-bia, at-tention I do crave, Of a sorrowful ditty I will tell, That

Other illustrations of metrical pattern may be seen in Chapter VII. There is no need to repeat any of them here, for their notation as they stand is sufficiently complete to show their relation to the facts of the present discussion. Notable among them is the stanza from The False Knight Upon the Road (page 97) which, as I read it, actually involves a shift of time within the stanza, something corresponding roughly to certain forms of time shift seen in ballad music.



happened here of late in the In-di-an-a state, Of a hero who many can't ex-cel.

4/8 (4) Ye heroes of Columbia, attention I do|crave, (4)

(3) Of a sorrowful ditty I will|tell, x x x (4)

(4) That happened here of late in the|Indiana|state, (4)

(3) Of a hero who many can't ex-cel. x x x (4)

The three types of measure just examined are the characteristic ones in the ballads, the first type (bisyllabic) being far and away the most common of all. The distinct rhythmic differences to be observed among the examples representing the different types will make clear, I believe, their reality as distinct patterns, and show beyond doubt that merely to indicate the number of stresses present in a line of ballad verse falls far short of describing its peculiar rhythmic quality.

The glossary is meant to function in a way peculiar to the needs of the treatise. It contains no real definitions. It is intended only to provide a means of easy reference to passages where definitions or explanations may be found. Terms of my own coinage are marked by \* ; those which follow Professor Croll's usage are marked by ‡ .

TERM	GENERAL APPLICATION	SEE PAGE
<u>Alternating refrain</u>	As opposed to end refrain; commonest form of internal refrain. . . . .	104
<u>Anacrusis</u>	Preliminary syllables in music and verse. . . . .	32, 62
<u>Arsis</u> ‡	Part of double measure con- taining weaker stress. . . . .	149
<u>Biphrasal tune</u> *	Tune containing two long phrases; formula A,B. . . . .	14
<u>Disyllabic measure</u>	Verse measure containing two syllables. . . . .	164
<u>Cadential pause</u> *	Metrical pause connected with internal cadence. . . . .	6
<u>Common Meter</u> (CM) ‡	Normal stanza form of the ballad; "ballad stanza." . . . .	60
<u>Compound quadriphrasal melody</u> *	Tune containing four long phrases; formula A,B,C,D. . . . .	15
<u>Compound rhythm</u>	As opposed to simple rhythm; based on alternation of stress. . . . .	143
<u>Compound triphrasal melody</u> *	Tune made up of three long phrases; formula A,B,C. . . . .	16
<u>End refrain</u> *	As opposed to internal refrain; refrain following narrative stanza. . . . .	108
<u>Inversion of stress</u>	Stress at variance with regular pattern. . . . .	146
<u>Long line</u> ‡	As opposed to short line of verse; line corresponding to long musical phrase. . . . .	61
<u>Long Meter</u> (LM) ‡	Stanza consisting of a quatrain of four-stress lines. . . . .	78
<u>Long phrase</u> *	As opposed to short musical phrase; combination of two short phrases. . . . .	11
<u>Long syllable</u>	As opposed to short syllable of spoken language. Refers to dura- tion of time. . . . .	29
<u>Measure</u>	Metrical unit of music and verse. . . . .	28
<u>Oblique stress coincidence</u> *	Form of rhythmic adjustment between verse and music. . . . .	133
<u>Ones, twos, threes, ‡ etc.</u>	Verses named according to their number of heard stresses. . . . .	34

TERM	GENERAL APPLICATION	SEE PAGE
<u>Parallel stress coincidence*</u>	Form of rhythmic adjustment between verse and music. . . . .	130
<u>Primary stress</u> ‡	Stronger (as opposed to the weaker) stress in the verse. . . .	146
<u>Quadrisyllabic measure</u>	Verse measure containing four syllables. . . . .	170
<u>Secondary stress</u> ‡	Weaker (as opposed to the stronger) stress in the verse. . . . .	146
<u>Short line</u> ‡	As opposed to long line of verse; line corresponding to short musical phrase. . . . .	61
<u>Short phrase*</u>	The basic phrasal unit of folk-song. 3	
<u>Short syllable</u>	As opposed to long syllable of spoken language. Refers to duration of time. . . . .	29
<u>Simple quadriphrasal melody*</u>	Melody made up of four short phrases. 8	
<u>Simple rhythm</u>	As opposed to compound rhythm; rhythm based on regular stresses. .	144
<u>Song-stanza*</u>	As opposed to text-stanza; the stanza as sung. . . . .	36
<u>Stress</u>	Accent in music and verse. . . . .	28
<u>Strong beginning</u> ‡	Alternating stress in strong-weak order. . . . .	150
<u>Sub-phrase*</u>	Subdivision of short phrase. . . . .	4
<u>Syncopation</u>	Used in poetry same as in music. . .	33
<u>Text-stanza*</u>	As opposed to song-stanza; the stanza as spoken. . . . .	36
<u>Thesis</u> ‡	Part of double measure containing stronger stress. . . . .	149
<u>Trisyllabic measure</u>	Verse measure containing three syllables. . . . .	168
<u>Two-Sisters type*</u>	Complex stanza type. . . . .	18
<u>Weak beginning</u> ‡	Alternating stress in weak-strong order. . . . .	153



The ballad and folk-song collections listed below are those which have proved most valuable in furnishing material for investigation in the present study. For bibliographical information on this general subject see the following books: G. H. Gerould, The Ballad of Tradition, Oxford, 1932; Barry, Eckstorm and Smyth, British Ballads from Maine, New Haven, Conn., 1929; and S. B. Hustvedt, Ballad Books and Ballad Men, Cambridge, Mass., 1930.

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